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MODERN THEOLOGY
AND THE
PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

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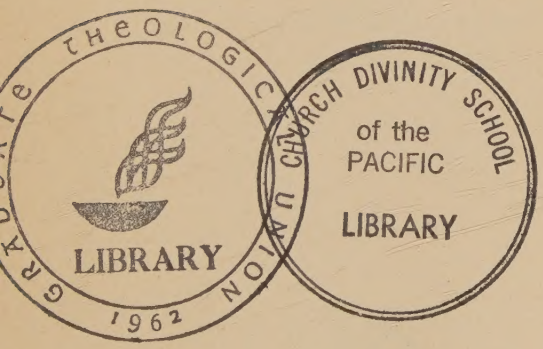
AND THE

PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

BY

WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN, D.D., PH.D.,

ROOSEVELT PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY IN THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY; AUTHOR OF THE "ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY," "CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN OUTLINE," ETC.



NEW YORK

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Published September, 1914

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To

THE MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

WHOSE INVITATION WAS THE
OCCASION OF THE PREPARATION OF THESE LECTURES AND
WHOSE SYMPATHETIC RESPONSE TO THEIR MESSAGE
IS MY EXCUSE FOR OFFERING THEM TO A WIDER PUBLIC

I DEDICATE

THIS ATTEMPT TO INTERPRET THE GOOD NEWS
OF OUR COMMON MASTER

16-60

PREFACE

In the fall of 1911 the writer was invited by the Congregationalists of Washington to deliver a series of theological lectures at their State Conference at Seattle. The lectures which form the first four and the last of the chapters which follow were given in response to this invitation. In 1913 they were repeated, with the addition of a sixth lecture (the fifth of the present series), at the Preachers' Institute of the Southern Methodists at Georgetown, Texas. The first, third, fourth, and fifth lectures were also given at the Preachers' Institute at Fayette, Missouri, in the same year.

A part of the first lecture has appeared in the *Southern Methodist Review* for January, 1912, under the title, "Modern

Theology and the Preaching of the Gospel," and the entire series in the *Biblical World* for 1913–14, the first lecture being printed in December, 1913, and the last in July, 1914.

The response to the lectures on the part of those who heard their delivery was so generous, and the requests for their publication in book form have been so many, that they are now given to the public in the hope that they may carry to a larger circle than could be reached by the spoken voice the author's conviction that the final test of every theology must be its preachableness, and his hope that judged by this standard modern theology may prove to have something of value to offer to the ministers of to-day.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	The Contribution of Modern Theology to the Equipment of the Preacher	1
II.	The Bible, What It Is and How to Use It	47
III.	The God of the Christian	87
IV.	From What and to What Are We Saved?	129
V.	The Deity of Christ in the Light of Modern Thought	175
VI.	The Church, Its Present Opportunity and Duty	225
	Index	271

I

THE CONTRIBUTION OF MODERN THEOLOGY TO THE EQUIPMENT OF THE PREACHER

We are all familiar with the effect upon our vision produced by a change of position. The higher we rise the more nearly we see things in their true perspective. But when we descend into the valley our angle of vision changes and we lose our sense of proportion. The objects that lie near bulk large and shut out the distant view. When we stand by the lake shore it seems only a little way across. It is only when we look down on its surface from above that we measure its breadth truly.

The experience has its analogy in the

inner life. Change of mental position is apt to have as its first effect a disturbance of mental values. The mind, too, has its hilltops and its valleys, and when we leave the former and descend into the latter we lose our sense of spiritual proportion.

This is true even when the change is for the better. We may leave our vantage ground of vision because we have seen a higher peak that commands a wider horizon. We descend to climb again, but while we are in the valley the distant view is gone.

In the Christian church we are passing through a period of such spiritual transition. There are many of our contemporaries whose religious experience is a valley experience. They have left the heights where they once stood secure, and are now living in the lowlands. They are concerned with the little and the near. The duties of the day and

the hour, or it may be of the generation, have shut out the broader vista of eternity. They have lost sight, for the moment, of the great peaks that have been the landmarks of religion in the past.

There are many reasons for this shifting of interest. The pressure of life is one cause. The inventions and discoveries of the last century have multiplied the claims upon our attention to an extent undreamed of by earlier generations. There are so many things to be done and to be learned that there are not hours enough in the day to meet the crowding demands, and the greater questions that require leisure are necessarily postponed.

But underlying these more obvious reasons there is a more fundamental cause. Our angle of vision has shifted. The great movement that we call modern science has revolutionised our view of the universe. It has taught us to think of many things as stable that we

had regarded as changing, and mobile that we had supposed to be fixed. It has given us a new astronomy, a new chemistry, a new physics, a new history, a new psychology, a new sociology. Beliefs that have grown hoary with antiquity are challenged, habits that have persisted from time immemorial are abandoned, and we live in constant expectation of some new discovery which shall render the latest word of present-day science obsolete.

It is inevitable that such an atmosphere should react upon the spiritual life. Where everything else is changing we cannot expect religion to remain unchanged. But what the change is likely to be, and how far it is likely to extend, to many is not yet clear. They know only that they have no longer the same unquestioning confidence in the old. What the new will be like which is to take its place, they do not yet know.

In religion, as on other sides of life, they can see only the immediate present.

One of the marks of this spiritual foreshortening is the decline of doctrinal preaching. The ministers of an older generation loved to dwell upon the great themes of religion. They preached about God and the soul, sin and salvation, judgment and immortality, the deity of Christ and his atonement. But to-day these subjects are no longer the staples of preaching. They are touched on only incidentally; often they are passed over altogether. The consciousness of a divine revelation to which one may hold with confidence amid the fluctuations of human opinion is less vivid to-day. Even when the older doctrines are not questioned they are no longer in the foreground. Men think of them as dogmas which have come down to us from the past with which we cannot dispense, at least not yet. But for the present work

of the church, for our dealing with men and women, in the needs and sorrows and temptations of their daily living, the less we have to do with them the better. What the minister needs above all things is an acquaintance with the actual facts of life. Let him then study the sciences that deal with these facts: economics, sociology, ethics, psychology, pedagogy, if you will. But theology, we are told, belongs to a past day and one cannot any longer hope to interest people in it.

Explicable as this attitude is, it is none the less unfortunate, for it involves the surrender of the historic ideal of Protestantism. The Reformation was an attempt to rescue the realities of religion from the speculations of the theologians and to open the way for the simplest believer into the very heart and citadel of faith. Theology, as Luther and his successors conceived it, is the systematic

exposition of the gospel. It is the science that tries to express in simple and intelligible language the great convictions by which the soul lives. So far from being content simply to hand down what has been received from the past, it is its function to interpret the meaning of religion to the present, to give an answer, and, so far as it can, to justify its answer, to the ultimate questions of the soul: the question as to the meaning and the purpose of life, the question as to the nature of God, and as to his relation to the soul of man, the question as to the destiny of the individual and of society, and the way in which that destiny may best be realised. These are the questions which the mind of man has always been trying to answer. If the theology of the past seems uninteresting to us, that is because we have been trying to live upon other people's answers instead of trying to answer our own questions for ourselves.

You will agree with me, then, I am sure, that if this be the true definition of theology it is something with which the preacher cannot dispense without loss. He is trying to win men from a life of selfishness and sin to a life of consecration and brotherhood, and he needs to understand clearly just what he proposes to do, and to express this in words that cannot be misunderstood. We wish to make men Christians. Well, what does it mean to be a Christian? Who is Christ, and why should we ask men to trust and follow him? We are trying to persuade men to believe in God. Who and what is God, and why should men believe in him? We warn men of a judgment to come, but what is the nature of this judgment? What are the principles on which it rests, and what reason have we for believing that there is another life which follows this, which ought to be taken into the account? Here surely are

questions of the highest practical moment for the daily life. Economics and politics and education and psychology are all very well, but, after all, they are concerned with means. What is the end which these means are designed to promote? What is the purpose of life? That is the question which theology seeks to answer. For a time it may be crowded out by more engrossing interests, but we are bound to come back to it in the end.

It is to this larger question that I would recall our thought. I believe that the present loss of interest in theology is destined to be temporary. Indeed, there are many signs that it is already passing. Already we are beginning to emerge from the thickets through which we have been struggling to heights that command a broader view. Slowly, but none the less surely, we are beginning to recover our vision of the eternal realities, of which for a time we had lost sight,

only to find them more majestic and satisfying than ever. It is well that we should pause for a moment and measure the gain and loss. I invite you therefore to look with me at the old view from a new view-point. What is the place of our Christian religion in the new world? What has science taught us about God and man, Christ and the Bible, sin and salvation? What contribution, in a word, has modern theology to make to the equipment of the preacher?

Now, I know that here I touch on delicate ground, for there are many people to whom science and religion seem inconsistent ideas. Science is to them the great destroyer. It is for ever challenging the old, and its habit of persistent questioning seems inconsistent with that attitude of reverence and submission which is the primary demand of religion. In the name of science have not theologians been attacking the most sacred

traditions of the past? Have they not torn the Bible to pieces? Have they not overthrown the authority of the creeds? Have they not rewritten the history of the church, and, in place of the clear-cut definite system in which we were brought up as children, left us simply a mass of confused and conflicting theories between which we are helpless to choose?

But it needs only a moment's thought to show that such a view is based upon a complete misconception. What do we mean by the scientific method? Science is simply glorified common sense. It is the application to the sphere of knowledge of principles which have been found useful in other departments of life: such principles, for example, as thoroughness, system, open-mindedness, and faith. To be scientific means that you are not content to base your judgment upon part of the facts, but that you insist upon having them all before you or, at least,

all that it is possible for you to gather. It means, further, that you group the facts in an orderly manner, putting like with like, and noting the smallest difference in form or structure. It means that you approach each new question with an open mind, ready to discard the conclusions of the past if good reason appear for so doing, or to modify them in any particular in which the evidence shall seem to require it. It means, finally, that you have an undying faith that this world is a reasonable world, and that loving, persistent, patient devotion to the cause of truth will be rewarded in the end by success. Surely there is nothing in all this to be afraid of. It is simply, I repeat, the consistent application on a large scale and over a wide area of the principles which as individuals we have all found practically useful in the conduct of our daily living.

Take modern medicine. I suppose there

is no department of human activity where the changes introduced by scientific method have been more numerous and more revolutionary. No one will be found to-day to question that they are changes for the better. But it did not seem so to the men to whom they were first suggested. We can imagine a doctor of the pre-scientific age addressing the innovators of his own profession in words like these: "Why ask me to accept your new theories in medicine? Has the body changed? Are the laws of health different? Are not the diseases from which we suffer the same which afflicted men in the days when Jesus healed the man sick of the palsy and restored the lunatic to a sound mind? Is the experience of mankind for two thousand years to be discarded overnight to make room for your untried panaceas?"

We know very well the answer to this

question. There has been no change in the laws of health. The enemies which attack the body are the same that they have always been, and the principles on which their defeat depends have not altered, but we have learned more about these principles than we once knew. We understand the mechanism of the body better and so we are able to apply the needed remedy more intelligently. We have been studying the problem of disease scientifically, and this enables us to do to-day things which we could not previously have done.

It is just so in religion. We have no new gospel, but we have a new method of approach to the gospel. The laws of spiritual health have not changed, and the enemies against which the soul of man needs to be protected have not altered, but we have learned more about spiritual law than we once knew, and so are able to approach the problem of spir-

itual healing more intelligently. And here again the change for the better is the result of the application of scientific method to religion.

Now, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The justification of science in any realm is the practical effects which it produces, and these are of two kinds. In the first place, it puts into our hands new powers for use; and in the second place, it gives us a new point of view.

I say, it puts new powers into our hands for use. Illustrations meet us on every hand. I have spoken of modern medicine. It is science which has given us the antiseptic treatment in surgery; it is science which has given us our serums and our antitoxins; science has wiped out smallpox; science has taught us that tuberculosis is a curable disease, and every year is making new inroads into the realm of the old enemy, sickness.

It is so in every department of human

experience. Science, I say, puts new tools into our hands. It has given us the steam-engine and the automobile, and the telephone and the telegraph, and now, at last, the aeroplane and the dirigible. It has made it possible for us to go from Maine to California in six days, and from Vancouver to Yokohama in a dozen.

Side by side with these new powers, and scarcely less important, is the new point of view which modern science has introduced. It has taught us for one thing to think of the world as a unity, for it has shown us that wherever we go, even if we go to Arcturus, or the North Star, we are face to face everywhere and always with the same unchanging laws. It has taught us, further, to think of the world as trustworthy, responding to our appeal, so that when we do our part we can be perfectly sure that the result will follow. It has taught us, finally, that

the world is meaningful, that through all the changes of the centuries one great purpose runs, one law of development which science calls evolution, but faith interprets as progress.

Now, what is true of science in general is true also of theological science. Here, too, its contribution is twofold. It has given us new tools which help us in our dealings with specific problems, and it has given us a new point of view. Both of these constitute a distinct practical contribution to the preacher's equipment, and enlarge his power of usefulness.

In the chapters that follow I hope to take up in some detail the first of these contributions and to illustrate by practical examples how modern theology helps us to meet specific difficulties and to solve particular problems. But before I do this, I want to speak of certain general results which form the common background from which we approach

these detailed problems. I want to speak, in other words, of the new point of view which modern theology has given us.

It is important to do this because it is so easy to lose sight of the broader effects in the discussion of details. I have spoken of the popular impression of modern theology as destructive and unsettling. I believe that this is largely due to the fact that, in their interest in the various problems of their science, specialists in theology have not taken the time to gather up and to express in simple and intelligible language the great results on which they are all agreed.

Theologians, to be sure, are not the only persons of whom this is true. Every profession has its specialists, interested in their own peculiar problems and talking a language of their own which no one else can understand. But in the case of theology the consequences of misunderstanding are more serious than in the

case of medicine or of law, because of the nature of the subject-matter with which it deals. For theology has to do with religion, and religion—so at least religious people believe—is the supreme concern of the human soul. Moreover, religion is the one bit of business which cannot be done by proxy. Salvation, however far-reaching may be its social consequences, is in its beginnings a matter of strictly individual concern. No man can commune with God vicariously. Each of us must do his own repenting, his own praying, his own believing.

Such, at least, is our Protestant conviction. Protestantism is democracy in religion. It is born of faith in the inherent relationship between the soul and God, in the inalienable right of each individual to approach God for himself, in the adaptation of truth to conscience and of conscience to truth, in the efficacy and sufficiency of the Christian gos-

pel, for all that man needs for his salvation, faith, and life.

For Protestants, therefore, it is not a light matter to introduce confusion into the realm of religion. If the gospel is obscured and its authority weakened, harm is done to more than the mind. The whole nature is affected, the springs of action are tapped, the heart is robbed of its accustomed outlet, and the result is spiritual poverty, anxiety, and ultimate despair.

I believe that it is the fear of some such result as this which accounts for the wide-spread distrust of the new theology. Those who look askance at the claims which have been made in its behalf are not necessarily narrow or unreasonable. They are, many of them, sincere and open-minded men, lovers of light and of progress, ready to accept whatever advances human knowledge and promotes human welfare. But they are

sensible men, wishing to look before they leap. They know that a thing is not necessarily good because it is new. In their own souls they have put Christianity to the proof and have found it what Paul found it, the power of God unto salvation. They regard the gospel as God's best gift to man, and are jealous of any movement, no matter how plausibly commended, which robs it of its life-giving power. They know that criticism is no substitute for testimony, theory no substitute for experience, speculation no substitute for revelation. They are sure that the gospel which is to meet the needs of humanity must be definite, practical, authoritative; a message direct from the heart of God to the soul of man. Such a message they miss in the new theology, and for this reason they hold aloof from it.

It is important, therefore, at the outset that we get the right perspective.

We need to distinguish the great results on which scholars as a whole are agreed from the points of detail in which they differ. Let me sum up these results as briefly as I can. I will mention four.

The first contribution of modern theology to the preacher's equipment is the discovery that religion is one of the ultimate facts of life. It is not something outside of man which he can take or leave as he chooses. It is inwrought into his nature, a part of the very structure of his being, which he cannot maim or stifle without at the same time injuring himself.

The second contribution of modern theology is the insight that, while religion is universal, not all religion is equally valuable or equally satisfying. Religions differ in kind, and difference in kind means difference in worth.

In the third place, modern theology makes it clear that if there is to be a

universal religion at all, it must be Christianity, and this for the simple reason that no other religion meets so completely and in so satisfying a way the permanent religious needs of mankind.

The fourth and last contribution of modern theology to practical religion—and the most important of all—is its renewed emphasis upon Christ as the centre and norm of Christianity.

Let us take up these contributions one by one and consider their significance. In the first place, I say, modern science teaches us that religion is one of the ultimate facts of life. It is not something outside of man which he can take or leave as he chooses. It is inwrought into his nature, a part of the very structure of his being, which he cannot maim or stifle without at the same time injuring himself.

This is, to be sure, no new discovery. Theologians have long asserted that man

was naturally religious. Tertullian went even farther and declared the soul was by nature Christian. But it is one thing to assert, and another to realise. Modern theology has furnished us with new evidence of the old fact, and so given it new freshness and vividness.

It has done this in various ways. The study of history is one way. However far we go back in time we find man looking up in adoration and worship to a being beyond himself. The study of comparative religion is another way. For three generations we have been observing the great civilisations of the East, and we find that they are religious through and through. Most effective and convincing (because nearest at hand) is the way of psychology. We are learning that the fundamental religious feelings —reverence, aspiration, dependence, submission, awe—are rooted in the nature of man, that they are as much a part of

ourselves as the craving for food and the love of kind, that the desire for worship is as natural and as irrepressible as the desire for activity when one awakes in the morning, or of rest when one returns home at night—that it is not a question, in short, whether or not one will be religious, but only what kind of religion one will have.

This being the case, we have a new point of view for judging some contemporary phenomena which without this key would be perplexing. Take, for example, such a movement as modern socialism. Here is a creed which in the person of many of its adherents dispenses with what most of us have been brought up to consider the essentials of religion. It has no God; it leaves immortality an open question; yet it calls forth the passionate loyalty of tens of thousands of earnest men and women. How will you account for this fact? It

is the religious nature which, having lost its old object, seeks a new outlet for its fervour and, in devotion to humanity, expends the store of consecration and of enthusiasm which former generations gave to God. Or take Christian Science—that most singular of modern religions—what more pathetic witness could be found to the hunger of the soul for the divine than the quick response with which Mrs. Eddy's appeal has met, in spite of what seem to many of us its manifest contradictions and absurdities? Take our social settlements, and our societies of ethical culture. Take any one of the countless movements which are springing up outside the church, with their programmes of social reform or of spiritual culture. These are not causes of discouragement, but of hope. They are witnesses to the deathless ideal which sleeps in every man. They are a challenge to our effort, an incentive to our

faith. If we have not been able to win these men and women with our gospel, it is not because they are not open to it, but because we have not yet learned how to preach it as we should.

For it is not enough to be religious. The important thing is to be religious in the right way. And this brings me to the second contribution of modern theology to the preacher's equipment, namely, the discovery that while religion is universal, not all religion is equally valuable or equally satisfying. Religions differ in kind, and difference in kind means difference in worth.

This again is no new discovery. Indeed, I fear that it may seem the veriest commonplace. For generations the assertion of the supreme value of his own brand of religion, in comparison with all others, has been the stock in trade of the preacher. How many sermons we have heard whose theme has been the con-

trast between natural and revealed religion, the religion of reason and the religion of the Bible—the former, useful indeed, but not sufficient, pointing the way, but unable to reach the goal; the latter alone, with its supernatural revelation and its infallible book, able to give the certainty which man needs for salvation!

But here again, it is one thing to assert and another to realise. The difficulty has been that when we have questioned those who have offered us so ready a solution of our quest for the best religion, they have not always answered in the same way. The Catholic has pointed to Catholicism, and the Protestant to Protestantism, and within Protestantism each denomination has offered its own particular kind of Christianity as the truth of God, while outside we have seen the Jew claiming divine authority for Judaism, the Mohammedan for Moham-

medanism, the Buddhist for Buddhism, and so on all along the line. If we are content to follow Mephistopheles's advice to Faust, and accept unquestioningly the teaching of our own denomination or church, we shall feel no difficulty, but if our minds are open and we wish a reason for the faith that is in us, the situation is, to say the least, perplexing.

Here modern theology has a distinct contribution to make. It has been studying the religions of the world scientifically, that is to say, in a systematic and orderly way, and it finds that, like all other objects of human knowledge when studied in this way, they fall into groups which differ from one another in interesting and instructive ways. There is, for example, the mystic group, which is introspective and contemplative, seeking salvation in immediate communion with God and content to let this world go on its way to destruction without let or

hindrance. There is the ethical group, with its keen social interest, concerned for justice and mercy, with a divine sanction for human conduct and a divine judgment for human sin. There are the nature religions, peopling the world with gods, but not yet having learned to differentiate the divine from the hills and the streams and the woods which are its abiding-place. There are the religions of authority with their insistence upon absolute and unqualified submission. And there are the religions of freedom, the Protestantisms of humanity, with their confidence in the individual and their recognition of the supremacy of conscience as the court of final appeal. These types recur again and again in the history of mankind. They not only characterise single religions; they reappear within each of the greater religions as the marks of smaller groups. They combine one with another in singular and

unexpected ways. Their action and reaction explain the constant changes in the history of religion and give the study of it its ceaseless fascination.

But science not only shows us the fact of difference. It helps us to estimate its significance. It shows us the consequences which follow from the adoption of one or the other of these forms of religion, and we find that they are of momentous importance. If your religion is of the mystic type, introspective and self-centred, you will enter a monastery, or make your cell in the desert, or perhaps climb on a pillar like Simeon the Stylite, and the crying wrongs of the weak and the oppressed will remain unredressed. If your religion is one of pure authority, whether you call your master pope or caliph you will shut your eyes to the plain teachings of reason and blindly support your church in whatever it asks you to do or think. If your relig-

ion be a nature religion, you will magnify the physical and it may be will give free rein to passions which a more enlightened conscience will tell you should be held constantly in check. If your religion be ethical, you will adopt the Apostle James's definition as your own and realise that in ministering to the orphan and in succouring the widow you are doing the will of God.

Of all the pages of human history there is none more tragic but at the same time none more instructive than that which tells the story of religion. As we read it we are impressed with the incalculable harm which may be done in the life either of an individual or of a society by a bad religion—a religion, that is to say, which tries to suppress some essential need of human nature or, on the other hand, which panders to its infirmities or superstitions. We realise with new force the truth, which we have so often dis-

missed as a mere platitude, that it is not enough to be religious. One must be religious in the right way, and we ask ourselves what reason we have for believing that the religion we profess is really of this kind.

Here, too, modern theology has help to give. It tells us not only of the necessity of religion and of its differences; it gives us a standard for judging between them. It assures us that if there is to be a universal religion at all it must be Christianity, and this for the simple reason that no other religion meets so completely and in so satisfying a way the permanent needs of humanity. Let me illustrate, if I can, what I mean.

I have spoken of the different types which are revealed by the study of comparative religion. But when we examine them more closely we find that for our present purpose they may all be reduced to two. The nature religions rep-

resent a stage through which man passes in his religious development, which is destined sooner or later to be outgrown, and which, as a matter of fact, has been outgrown in principle in all the greater religions. The religion of authority is the expression of a permanent instinct present in every age as the necessary corrective of an exaggerated individualism. It is the form in which the social acquisitions of the past are conserved and handed down to future generations. There remain two great types which in every age have confronted one another as rivals for the allegiance of the religious man: the mystic type and the ethical type—the religion which seeks contact with God in the immediate experience of the soul, and the religion which finds in the service of humanity the highest expression of worship. Each has its roots deep in the subsoil of human nature. Neither has been able to dis-

place the other. The religion which is to win universal acceptance must make place for both.

I say, it must make place for both, but it must do it in a consistent and satisfying way. It is not enough to place the two side by side and let them live their lives as best they can without inner understanding or harmony. Such an outward juxtaposition of competing and inconsistent types has taken place again and again in religious history and no one religion has the monopoly of it. Every great religion has its mystics and its moralists, its recluses and its agitators. But this of itself does not qualify it for world supremacy.

What I have in mind is something much more fundamental. I have in mind an inner harmony, a type of religion which satisfies the mystic's hunger for God and the moralist's passion for man in one and the same experience, a

religion which is so conscious of the immanence of God that it feels him as the very life of the soul, and yet which knows that the God whom it worships is a personal God, the Father of many children, the ruler of society as well as of the individual, the mind that plans and the will that decrees, as well as the spirit that inbreathes. Only a religion which conceives God in such a way can hope for world supremacy.

Such a religion is Christianity. Here at last we find the synthesis for which the whole history of religion is striving, the goal to which in every age it has been unconsciously pointing. This insight, painfully won as the result of an infinity of patient labour, is the third great contribution of modern theology to the preacher's equipment.

It is not easy to exaggerate its importance. It gives us a vantage-ground in our appeal to men of other faiths which

could not be attained in any other way. We do not come to them as if they were destitute of religion, but as the interpreter and completer of the religion they have. Is the man we are seeking one of the mystic type, forgetful, in his joy at the realised presence of God, of the claim of the neighbour who lies at his door? We have our word for him. We do not ask him to deny the reality of his experience, or question the fact of the omnipresence of the immanent God. We bring to him a completer revelation of the nature of the God he worships and bid him see his character revealed in the face of Jesus who went about doing good.

Is it a case, on the other hand, of some zealous social reformer so intent on his effort to secure more tolerable conditions of living and a more just scale of remuneration that he has no room in his scheme of life for prayer? For him, too, we have our message. We do not want

him to value man less but more. We want to enlarge his estimate of the capacity of humanity till it is broad enough to include fellowship with the God of all the earth. We point him to Jesus, the great servant, as in the silence of the mountain in solitary communion with the Father he gains strength for the next day's ministry.

I say, we point him to Jesus, and this brings me to the last of the contributions of modern science to practical religion of which I shall have time to speak, namely, its renewed emphasis upon Christ as the centre and norm of Christianity.

I have spoken of the appeal of Christianity to men of other faiths. It is an appeal which was never more widespread and never more effective than in our day. Already the new aids which modern science has put into the hands of our missionaries are beginning to produce their appropriate results. But there

is one obstacle which hampers their efficiency, and that is the divisions which still exist among Christians themselves. We speak of Christianity as if it were something as to the nature of which everybody was agreed. Yet as a matter of fact there are almost as many different kinds of Christianity as there are men. All the great types which we have distinguished in other religions reappear here. By what right, then, do we differentiate Christianity from other religions? Wherein does its superiority consist?

Here modern science gives us a perfectly definite answer. The distinctive thing about Christianity is Christ. He is its new contribution to the cause of religion. The differences of which we have spoken are only the persistence on new soil of the old types whose roots lie deep in the past. They are not Christianity. They are only the raw material out of which Christianity is

made. Christianity is the effect which has been produced upon these old types by the new spirit which Jesus has introduced. *Christianity is Christ, so far as he has yet become incarnate in humanity.*

Let me linger for a moment upon this point, for it is of the highest importance. No aspect of modern theology is more significant than the renewed emphasis which it has laid upon Jesus Christ. It is not simply that it has told us more about him, although that is true. It is not simply that it has recovered from the mists which had obscured him the historic figure whose life and death and resurrection the Gospels record. It is not simply that it has distinguished the Christ of the New Testament from later theological speculation concerning him, but that it has shown us more clearly than we had ever realised before how fundamental is the place which Christ

holds in the religion to which he has given his name.

There are three different ways in which Christ is central in Christianity. In the first place, he is its founder. From him came the impulse from which the new religion sprang, and to this day his person marks the dividing line between all that went before and all that has come after.

Nor is this division one of time only. Jesus is not simply the founder; he is the standard of the Christian religion. He is the test by which we distinguish what is truly Christian from what is so only in name. Christianity is a historical religion and, like everything historical, contains elements of very different antecedents and value. Much that calls itself Christian can be paralleled in other religions, is, in fact, derived from them. But Christ is unique. There is no second Jesus.

This does not mean that we are to admit nothing into Christianity which we cannot prove to have been historically derived from Jesus. Christianity is not simply the reproduction of Jesus' teaching; it is something much grander and more wonderful. It is the expression of his life. All that is alive grows, that is to say, it changes. It is always taking up into itself new materials and fashioning for itself new forms, but it is change according to a plan. The spirit within sets bounds to the life in its outward reach, and directs it to a goal as yet unseen. It is so in the Christian religion. The spirit of Jesus is the organising principle of Christianity, and the justification of creed and doctrine and institution alike must be found in the extent to which they make his personality more real to the imagination of men and his ideals more completely dominant in their lives.

We have here just what we need, an explanation and an incentive. We have an explanation of the differences which separate Christians. They are the survival of the pre-Christian in Christianity. We have a standard by means of which we can adjust them. The gift which we offer to the men of other religions is the remedy by which we must purify our own.

And so the last word of the new theology is the first word of the old evangelism: Come to Jesus. Test your life by him; make him Lord of your thought, King of your purposes, Saviour and Friend of your soul. Study the world in which you live, this changeful, baffling world, where so much is fascinating and so much heart-breaking, and see him slowly moulding it by his Spirit after the pattern his Father has set. Dare to believe that he will have his way in the end.

It is no new gospel, then, that the new theology brings to us, only the old gos-

pel set in a new light; and yet in a very true sense it is a new gospel. It is new in the freshness of its appeal, since it comes to us by another channel and seeks its evidence in unfamiliar quarters. It is new in the breadth of its foundation, since it is based upon an induction of all accessible facts and can face the last word of modern discovery with an even mind, sure that it will bring nothing to be feared. It is new, as every fresh experience of an old fact is new to the man who has lived it over again with that openness of mind, that attention of the will, and that large faith in the overshadowing presence of a God of wisdom and of truth which is the spirit of science at its best. The preacher who has put this to the proof in his own experience will no longer be afraid of the new theology. On the contrary, he will welcome it as an indispensable ally in the supreme task to which his life is given,

the preaching of the gospel of the living Christ who is the spring of all progress and the goal of all endeavour, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

II

THE BIBLE, WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO USE IT

THERE have been three great themes which in every age have engaged the attention of religious men. The first is authority, the second is God, the third is salvation. What is the source of religious faith, or, in other words, what is the seat of authority in religion? What is the object of religious faith—the unseen Being on whom we depend, to whom we look up, and with whom we commune? What is the effect of religious faith? How does religion help us practically? What difference does it make whether we are religious or not? These are the three perennial questions of religion. We shall take them up in turn and ask ourselves

what light modern theology has to shed upon each.

And first, of the source of religious faith, or the problem of authority in religion. This brings us to the subject of the present chapter: the Bible, what it is and how to use it.

There are two reasons for beginning with the Bible. The first is because it is the point at which modern theology began; the second is because it is in connection with the Bible that we find the most pressing and the most difficult of our practical problems.

I propose to raise, and, so far as I can, to answer, the following four questions: First, why do we need a Bible at all? Secondly, how did the old Bible meet this need? Thirdly, what change has modern theology made in our view of the Bible? Fourthly, what practical effect will this change have upon the preacher's work?

Why, then, do we need a Bible? This is our first question. I answer, for two reasons. In the first place, we need it as a source of religious inspiration and guidance for the individual soul, and, in the second place, we need it as a standard for the church.

We need the Bible as a source of religious inspiration and instruction for the individual. It is one of the most familiar features of our religious life that, like all life, it has to be constantly renewed. If it is not fed from without, it will starve. Now, the most natural way to feed the religious life is to draw upon the resources of some one else whose life is rich. Prayer is the supreme example of this renewal of life through contact with a higher source of supply. I shall have more to say of prayer by and by. But one of the perplexing features of this whole matter of religion lies just here—that, while prayer is open to every

one of us, we are not always equally in the mood for prayer. What are we to do in such a case as this? There is one very obvious thing that we can do, and that is to come into contact with some other man or woman who has the spirit of prayer. This is the philosophy of churchgoing. Men go to church in order to renew and enrich their devotional nature by contact with others whose nature is richer and fuller than their own. The function of the preacher as from Sunday to Sunday he stands in the pulpit is to vitalise and to renew the starved and parched lives in his congregation by sharing the more abundant resources to which his own life has access.

But who is to feed the preacher? Here is where the Bible comes in. The Bible is the great repository of the spiritual life of the past. Through the Bible we meet the men who have been greatest in religion—Moses and David and Isaiah

and Jeremiah and St. Paul, and our Lord himself. The Bible is the book of the ideal, holding up before us the standard of truth and duty when our own vision grows dim. The Bible is the book of warning, reminding us, when we are tempted to forget it, of the inevitable consequences of sin. The Bible is the book of comfort, bringing into our loneliness and isolation the consciousness of a divine companionship and an unfailing love. The Bible is the book of hope, gilding the cloud of our discouragement with the golden lining of the ideal, painting before us the outlines of the holy city, the home of righteousness and brotherhood and peace, which is some day to come down from heaven to earth. The Bible, then, I repeat, is the great source of inspiration and of instruction for the individual religious life. *The Bible is the book that preaches to the preacher.*

But religion is not simply an individual affair. It is a social matter as well, and this brings me to the second great function of the Bible, namely, its use as a standard. When we look over Christendom we find that Christians are divided into groups, differing one from another in beliefs and practices and, what is still more important, in habits of feeling. These differences constitute one of the great obstacles to the success of our preaching. They are an obstacle at home, multiplying churches where fewer strong churches would be more effective. But they are a far greater obstacle on the foreign field, introducing confusion and distrust where simplicity and directness are all-important. What we need here is some statement to which we can all refer, some platform on which we can all stand, and such a platform we have in the Bible.

There are two ways in which the

Bible is fitted to act as such a standard. It is fitted outwardly because it is the one book as to whose use all Christians are agreed, and it is fitted inwardly by the nature of its contents, for it is the book which gives us the most direct, reliable, and first-hand knowledge of Jesus Christ, the founder, the standard, and the renewer of the Christian religion.

The Bible, then, I repeat, if it is to do what we require, must fulfil a double function. It must be the source of religious inspiration and guidance for the individual, and it must be the common standard of faith and practice for the church. Now, this was just what historic theology has asserted of the Bible from the beginning. The Bible, it tells us, is, in the first place, the great means of grace, and, in the second place, it is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We shall ask in a moment how the Bible was supposed to render this double

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service. But at the outset it is important for us to recognise that the need here pointed out is a real need. We need to-day just the kind of help in our individual and social life that our fathers and mothers found in the Bible.

What kind of a book, then, was this old Bible supposed to be? In the first place, it was supposed to be an inerrant Bible, and by that we mean that it was a Bible which by a special activity of the divine Spirit had been preserved in all its parts from mistake. It was accurate in its history, accurate in its science, accurate in its chronology, accurate, it need not be said, in its morals and its religion. You could open it at any page and be perfectly sure that the sentence which you read came to you as a message straight from God.

From this first characteristic a second followed. It was a book that was all on a level. I have said you could open it

at any page and find a message straight from God. That was just what the old theologians did. They chose their proof-texts indiscriminately from Genesis to Revelation, confident that in a book which had God for its author there could be no inconsistency or contradiction.

As a matter of fact, however, there proved to be practical difficulties in the application of this method. When the different passages were compared with one another their teaching did not always seem to agree. There were differences as to statement of fact, such as the two stories of the flood * or the two accounts of the choice of Saul to be king.† What was more serious, there were apparent differences in the moral and religious standards applied. Now God was represented as a jealous God, ruthless in his opposition to evil, calling upon the

* Gen. 6 : 13–22; 7 : 6–24; Gen. 7 : 1–5.
† I Sam. 8 : 4–22; I Sam. 9 : 15–27; 10 : 1–9.

Israelites to exterminate the Amalekites, man, woman, and child,* smiting Uzzah dead when he laid presumptuous hands upon the ark,† punishing David's sin by a pestilence that swept away seventy thousand of his people;‡ and again he was tender and compassionate, ready to forgive the repentant sinner, however great his guilt, and requiring forgiveness of men even to seventy times seven.§

Now, so long as it was a matter of the individual alone, this difficulty was not an insuperable one. A man seeking spiritual food could always find what he needed in the Bible. When he met a hard passage he could do what we all do in such cases—pass it by and go on to something that is simpler. But in the case of the church at large the matter was more perplexing. It was not possible here to shirk the difficulties.

* I Sam. 15 : 3. † II Sam. 6 : 6, 7.
‡ II Sam. 24 : 15. § Matt. 18 : 22.

One must look the apparent contradictions in the face and find some way of reconciling them.

There were two possible ways which might be taken. One of them was the method of allegory. One might say that the teaching of the Bible was not meant to be interpreted literally. The Bible is a spiritual book, veiling its meaning under parables, only to be understood in the light of the teaching of the same Spirit that inspired it. This was a method very popular in the early church. Origen, the great Alexandrian theologian, used it, and multitudes have followed his example.

But the trouble with this method is that it goes too far. If you cannot trust the plain teaching of Scripture at one point, how can you be sure that it is to be trusted at any? If you spiritualise the accounts of God's anger may you not equally explain away the accounts

of his love? Our Protestant fathers rejected the method of allegory and substituted the method of harmony. They contended that every sentence in the Scriptures must be interpreted at its face value; that if we read in the account of the flood at one time that the animals went in two by two,* and again that they went in seven by seven,† there were two sets of animals that went in, and so on all along the line. Now, I am not interested here to follow out this method or to criticise it. I want simply to call attention to this one point that, as an effort to meet the practical difficulty for which it was designed, it was a failure, and that for the very simple reason that there was no standard provided to determine whose solution of the particular difficulty in question was correct.

In theory, indeed, the old Protestant view of the Bible was a very simple one.

* Gen. 6 : 19; 7 : 8, 9. † Gen. 7 : 2, 3.

Every one went to it for himself and interpreted it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The assumption was that the men who went in the right spirit would come to identical results. But, as a matter of fact, they did not come to identical results. They came to very different results. Who was to decide between them? Evidently there was need of some second standard which could be used as a guide in the interpretation of the Bible, and such a standard was actually found in the doctrine and tradition of the church.

If everybody had been in the same church this method would have worked well enough, but as we all know this was not the case. The Protestants themselves were divided into their several denominations. There were the Anglicans and the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists and the Methodists, and these again were divided into different schools

and parties. There were the Calvinists and the Arminians. There were the Antinomians and the Legalists, there were the High Churchmen and the Low Churchmen and the Broad Churchmen. Each of these had their own tradition, their own standard, their own creed by which they measured the interpretation of the Bible; and, while in theory they all declared that the Bible was the supreme standard and everybody must be free to interpret it for himself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in practice they repudiated this principle. As an actual means of bringing about agreement among Christians as to the essentials of faith and practice the older way of using the Bible has not been successful.

Here modern theology comes to our aid, for it furnishes us with a point of view which makes possible a scientific interpretation of the Bible, that is to say,

an interpretation whose methods and results shall commend themselves equally to all men of impartial spirit. Let me try, if I can, to state what this view is.

There are two points in which the newer view of the Bible differs from the old. In the first place, it lays greater emphasis upon the human element in its composition. The Bible, as we have come to look at it to-day, is a composite book; that is to say, it is a book which is the product of many different authors, writing over a long period of time and making use of materials in part furnished for them by the science and philosophy of their time. It is a book, therefore, which has to be interpreted by the standards which we use in reading other literature of the same kind. We have to distinguish the different purposes which influenced the authors and the different literary forms which they used. We have to ask ourselves what light is shed

on the meaning of a particular passage or book by the conditions of the time or the practices which prevailed among contemporary people at the same general stage of culture. In short, we have to use the same methods which have already proved so successful in the interpretation of the literature of other ancient peoples.

From this conclusion a second follows —that not all parts of the Bible stand on the same moral and spiritual level. The Bible is not a single book but a library; or rather, to be exact, two libraries. It is a collection extending over many centuries and telling the story of a progressive revelation. Beginning on a comparatively low level of culture and dealing with men of primitive and simple ways of thought and feeling, we rise little by little to the greatest heights of experience and insight which humanity has yet attained. It is clear that in the use of a book of this kind discrimination

is necessary. We cannot pick out a text anywhere from Genesis to Revelation and apply it without reference to its context. We must read the earlier in the light of the later; the part in the light of the whole. Isaiah means more to us than Kings, Romans than Isaiah, and the Gospels than all three. We are Christians, and to us Christ is greater than Isaiah, greater even than St. Paul.

Now, how does this help us practically? At first sight it would seem as though such a view were anything but helpful. If the Bible is a composite book, representing different grades of moral and spiritual insight, making use of elements derived from other sources which, in turn, differ in value, what becomes of its divine authority? How can we still have confidence in its teaching? How is it fitted to serve as the infallible helper and guide that we need?

Let us remind ourselves again what we

need in the Bible. We need two things: in the first place, food for our own souls and, secondly, a common standard of faith and practice.

I say, we need food for our own souls. But who are we, and what kind of food do we need? Well, in the first place, we are people of different degrees of spiritual maturity, and, in the second place, we are, or at least it is to be hoped we are, people who are growing.

We are people who differ in spiritual maturity, and that means that we need different kinds of spiritual food. Some of us are still children, literally, or if not in years, at least in point of view. What we need in our Bible is some interesting story that will bring home the truth in picturesque form and point a moral, simple enough for us to understand—such a story, for example, as that of Joseph and his brethren, or of David and Jonathan. Some of us are plain men

and women bearing the burden and heat of the day, too busy to have much time and thought for speculation or hard questions, and what we need is the assurance that there is a good God who cares for us and who gives us the supply that we need day by day. Our standpoint is like that of the simple folk for whom Luther wrote his Smaller Catechism, when he defined creation by saying: I believe that God "has given and still preserves to me body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my limbs, my reason and all my senses; and also clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and child, land, cattle, and all my property."* And we find our need best met by the Twenty-third Psalm or the sixth chapter of Matthew. And some of us, it may be a very few, are philosophers whose minds are constantly occupied with the puzzles of existence, who have formed the habit of

* Schaff, "Creeds of Christendom," III, p. 78.

inquiry and question and who want some answer that presses back of the surface of things to their ultimate meaning. Job is the book that comes closest home to us, or the story of Paul's struggle in the seventh chapter of Romans.

But this is not all. Not only have we different needs as individuals, but these needs differ from time to time. We are growing. Those of us who are children will some day be men and women; those of us who were content to take life at its face value may at any time have an experience which forces upon us the ultimate questions of the soul, and the Bible we need is a book which has provision within its broad covers for all these different kinds of needs. We need a Bible that will do, not simply for one age, or for one class, or for one race, but for all mankind, the Japanese and the Chinese and the Hindu and the South American, as well as the German and the

Englishman and the American. And we need a Bible that will do for every century, not for the first simply or the second but for the twentieth as well, and, what is quite as important for us now to remember, not for the twentieth only but for the first and the second and all the centuries that lie between.

The Bible that we have is a Bible of just this kind, for it gives us the record of a *progressive* revelation. And by that I mean a revelation which unfolds itself step by step in order to meet the varying needs of the varying stages in a growing and developing life. The Bible tells the story of the way in which God has been training mankind from infancy to mature manhood and womanhood. It is a book, therefore, in which you can find something for man at every stage in his moral and spiritual experience.

This does not mean, of course, that there are no fixed standards, that what

is true for one man may be false for another. I shall have something more to say of this matter of standard in a moment. But it means that there are different aspects of truth and different methods of approaching it. It means that when I speak to children I must talk the language of children. It means that if I am talking to primitive men I must use ideas that lie within the range of their comprehension. Thus, if I find the biblical writers using conceptions of science and of history that our own age has outgrown, I must remember that they were speaking to men of their day and that if they had talked our language they could not possibly have been understood. I must ask myself what was the particular truth which they designed to teach at the time and see whether it be not one of which I can make use in dealing with some of my own people whose need is similar.

I am far from thinking that this use of the Bible as a graded text-book, adapted to men of different stages of maturity, is a discovery of modern theology. All great preachers have used the Bible in this way, and this has been a chief source of their greatness, but what I mean is this, that the older view of the Bible rendered this use of it more difficult and less intelligent than the new. *Practically*, to be sure, the preacher used the Bible as a graded book, but in *theory* he conceived of it as designed from cover to cover for pupils of the highest grade. And the reason for this was that he had not yet gained the historic point of view.

This difficulty modern theology has removed, for it has taught us the steps through which our Bible came to be and so showed us the uses which each part was designed to serve, not only for our day but for its own. In doing this

it has not only helped us to a better understanding of the Bible we know but has recovered for spiritual use large sections of the book which but for its help would have fallen almost altogether into the background.

There is that old story of the creation which for so many years was the battle-ground on which the champions of religion and science waged interminable war. On the theory of inerrancy the story bristles with difficulties. It is, to say the least, exceedingly difficult to reconcile it with the modern view of the creation of the world. But if we read it historically, in the light of the parallel creation stories of Babylonia and Assyria, we see for the first time its true significance. The picture of the world in the two accounts has striking similarities, but the conception of God is fundamentally different. In the Babylonian story it is the strife of two rival monsters which is responsible

for the making of the world. But in the Bible creation is due to an act of will. It is the fiat of that free Spirit who formed the world to be the scene of the redemptive purpose which was to culminate in Jesus Christ. "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light."* So read, the first chapter of Genesis remains for us to-day as truly revelation as ever it was in the past.

Or take an illustration of an altogether different kind. There is that great section of the Bible that lies between Isaiah and Malachi. When I was a boy all this part of the Bible was a sealed book to me. It was prophecy, and that meant that it was prediction. It was a part of the Bible in which God had foretold what was going to happen by and by in that great crisis lying somewhere in the future with which as a boy I as yet felt little concern. When I tried to read the proph-

* Gen. 1 : 3.

ecies I could not understand what they meant, and as I grew older and consulted the commentaries I was not much better off, for I found that each commentator had his own scheme for the interpretation of prophecy and that these schemes differed one from another.

Now the scientific study of the Bible has helped us to a new understanding of these difficult passages, for it has shown that they have an entirely different meaning. They are not exclusively concerned with the future, as we had supposed. They have a present reference. The prophets were men of their own day, wrestling with specific evils, moral evils many of them, social abuses, economic wrongs, just the kind of questions that you and I face to-day as we pick up our newspapers and read of the last congressional investigation, or the last instance of the shameless flaunting of wealth. They were men, I say, who were facing

a situation of this kind and who brought to bear upon it the principles of ethical religion, faith in the God who judges not by the outward appearance but by the heart, faith in the God who is not the God of Israel only but the God of the whole world, the God who loves so much that he is not afraid to punish, the God whose will, however it may seem for the time to be thwarted, will in the end certainly prevail.

Here is a whole mine of homiletical material which has been opened to us by the studies of such men as George Adam Smith and others—just the kind of message that we need to bring home to an awakened conscience that is facing for the first time in its full meaning the fact of social wrong.

It is because Isaiah and Jeremiah are books of this kind that they are, in the highest and truest sense of the word, *prophecy*. Just because they are con-

cerned primarily with the needs of the present, the sins and the sufferings and the salvation of the men and women who were living at the time, do they furnish the most direct preparation for the Christ who was to come, the great Servant who went about doing good and who gave his life a ransom for many.

Or suppose we take our illustration from the New Testament instead of the Old. How many of us there are who would be obliged to confess, if we were honest, that we had found the Epistles hard reading. We had been brought up —I know I was—to look upon such a book as Romans as a text-book of theology, dealing with such doctrines as original sin and justification by faith, and we were not particularly interested in doctrine—doctrine, as such, I mean: doctrine in text-book form, divorced from life.

But modern theology is showing us that the divorce is only in our own minds.

Instead of being theological treatises, Paul's letters are transcripts of his personal experience, bits of autobiography which give us an insight into the life history of one of the greatest men who ever lived. They tell us of his struggle after righteousness and of his failure, of his agony and despair, of the amazing transformation which Christ wrought in his life, of the revolution which it brought about not only in his conduct but in his way of thinking, of his consecration of himself to the service of this new Master, and of his effort through long years of the most varied experience to interpret the gospel of Christ to men of different intellectual antecedents and social environment. They show us, in a word, a man facing the same kind of questions that confront us to-day; whose experience, therefore, can be practically helpful to us at the point where we most need help.

So in various ways the scientific study of the Bible is recovering for our use parts of the Bible which for many people had lost their meaning and making them again what God designed them to be—practical helps in the solution of our present difficulties and the answer to our present questions.

But this, after all, is only half the story. The Bible is necessary not simply to feed the individual: it has a social function as well. It is the common standard by which the church is to test its Christianity. How far is the Bible of modern criticism effective here?

Let me recall again what is the nature of the test that we need. We need a test that will *actually work in practice*, a Bible that will really resolve the differences between Christians and bring them to a common mind. Now, the difficulty with the old view of the Bible was that, *as a matter of fact, it did not do this.* In-

stead of uniting, it divided. Each man brought to the book his own presuppositions and standards; each group picked out from the multiplicity of material which the book contained that which appealed most to its own need and by this judged the rest. What we need in a standard which is actually to work is some common principle which every one recognises and which is equally applicable in every case. Such a principle modern theology gives us in Christ. Christ, it tells us, is the key to the Bible. He is the common standard by which all its teaching is to be unified. When any question arises of interpretation, when it is a matter of judging with reference to the different grades of insight and of culture of which we have been speaking, it is to him that we are to come as the final test. It is the old principle of Luther brought down to date: "The real touchstone by which

all books are to be judged" is "whether they make much of Christ or not."*

Here again I am far from thinking that this principle is a discovery of the new theology. In every age Christ has been central in Christian experience, and earnest men have turned to him for guidance in their perplexities and help in their difficulties—in the Bible as elsewhere. What I mean is that the older view of the Bible rendered this resort less obvious and less certain. I have spoken of Luther as using our principle, but this is only partly true. When Luther spoke of Christ he used the word in a general sense for whatever in the Bible met his need of salvation and forgiveness. He did not discriminate between the Christ of the Gospels and of the Epistles, or even of Old Testament prophecy. Indeed, he could not, for he did not com-

* Köstlin, "The Theology of Luther," Eng. tr., vol. II, p. 228.

mand the historic method which alone makes such discrimination possible.

When we use the term Christ to-day we do so in a more exact sense. We think of the Jesus of the Gospels, the historic figure whose life and death and resurrection the evangelists record and to whose continued influence the Epistles witness. And when we say that Christ is our standard for interpreting the Bible we mean that we must bring everything which it contains to the test of his life, teaching, and character.

This does not mean, of course, that we attach no value to those parts of the Bible which fall below Jesus' standard. What we have already said of the earlier stages of revelation should have made this abundantly plain. Still less does it mean that we are to admit nothing to our Bible which goes beyond the explicit teaching of Jesus. The high Christology of Paul and of John has its con-

tribution to make to our theology, just as truly as the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. Revelation did not stop when Jesus died. He explicitly declared that he had much to say to his disciples which they were not prepared to receive during his earthly life. He promised his Spirit to guide them into all truth, and in every age Christianity has shown itself the religion of freedom and of progress. But what is meant is that Jesus is central in the whole process of revelation. He is the test by which progress must be measured. Is it a question of what has gone before? We must ask how far it has prepared the way for him. Is it a question of what comes after? We must ask how far it is the legitimate unfolding of his principles.

I have spoken of the high Christology of Paul and John. At the heart of this Christology lies the conviction that in Jesus Christ we have to do with more

than man. In him we see the revelation in human form of the unseen God who from the beginning has been seeking his erring children.

It is a conviction that has verified itself through centuries of Christian experience. But how shall we interpret to ourselves its full meaning? There are two possible ways that we may take. We may say, since Jesus is God incarnate everything in his life that seems inconsistent with our thought of God must be explained away; or we may say, since Jesus is God incarnate every sweet and satisfying and adorable quality which he illustrated we may be sure is found in supreme measure in God. Can there be any question which of these two principles should be controlling in our interpretation of the Bible? Yet must we not recognise that it is a principle which has not always been given its full weight in the theology of the past?

To follow the applications of this principle would carry us too far, but I can perhaps make my meaning clear by an illustration. Suppose we compare the Bible to a tract of country through which the soul has to pass in its quest of truth and life. It has food in abundance to nourish the soul in its quest, and beauty to delight the spirit, but there are also rough places to be traversed and hills to be climbed.

What will the soul need if it is to make the journey successfully? Clearly, two things: light to see the way and a path to point the direction.

The older theology provided for the first of these needs in its doctrine of the witness of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the sun which lights up the dark places of the Bible and reveals to the soul their uses and their beauty. Without the witness of the Spirit no one can read the Bible understandingly or respond to its appeal.

But the traveller needs more than light. He needs direction. He wishes to know not only what the country contains to supply his wants on the journey but also which way to take to reach his goal. In other words, he needs a path.

Now, a path is not a prison. It is a way along which free men may walk erect. The charm of a path is that it opens vistas on every side and provides opportunities for digression to the right hand or to the left as some new object of interest invites inspection. But the wise traveller will never stray too far, for he knows that if he does he may lose his way and so finally miss his goal.

So Christ gives us our direction as we journey through the Bible. He is the path from which it is never safe to stray far. All that the book contains is given us freely for our use and our enjoyment. He shows us how to use it aright and how to enjoy it to the full.

This is the true meaning of that old doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture which has been a stumbling-block to so many. By the infallibility of Scripture we do not mean simply that the book which lies before us on the table contains no mistakes. That is an altogether inadequate conception of the meaning of this great phrase. We mean that in this book, prepared by the Spirit of God for his church, we have a guide which, when read humbly, reverently, prayerfully, and in the spirit of Christ, will infallibly lead the individual and the church into the knowledge of that truth which they need to know. That is the only kind of infallibility which can do us any practical good. And that is the kind of infallibility which we actually have in our Bible.

May we not hope that, when the critical movement in the midst of which we stand shall have run its course and

we are able more clearly to distinguish its assured results from the shifting theories which are the inevitable accompaniment of any forward step on the road of human knowledge, the final result will be to leave us all with a profounder realisation of the practical power and authority of the Bible; that as in the days of Luther it proved itself the book of freedom, leading men out from the yoke of a church which had grown corrupt and tyrannous into the liberty of the sons of God, so to-day it will show itself the book of unity, revealing to all of us who call ourselves Christians that common heritage of faith and hope and love which has been given to us by God in trust for all mankind?

III

THE GOD OF THE CHRISTIAN

From the question as to source of faith we pass to the question as to its object: from the Bible to that which the Bible contains.

The answer can be given in a single word. The object of faith is God. God is the subject of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and every question of practical religion with which it deals has its roots finally in the view which is taken of him. It is no minor or unimportant subject, therefore, which is to engage our attention but one which brings us into the very heart and inner shrine of religion. The oldest and yet the newest, the most profound but the most prac-

tical, the most exhaustless yet the most necessary of all the subjects to which the mind of man can be directed or with which the heart of man can be concerned is God.

The method which we shall follow in the present discussion is the same which has already proved helpful in our treatment of our former subject. We shall ask, in the first place, why we need God at all. In the second place, we shall ask how the theologians of the past thought of God as meeting this need. In the third place, we shall ask what contribution modern theology has to make to our idea of God. And finally we shall ask what effect we may expect this contribution to have upon the religious life.

Why, then, do we need God? We have never seen him, we have never heard him, we have never touched him. There are wise men who have questioned whether he exists at all or, if he exists,

whether we can know anything definite about him. Yet in every age men have gone on believing in God, and the belief has powerfully affected their conduct. What is the explanation of this fact? What need, I repeat, is satisfied by faith in God?

I answer, we need God for two reasons: In the first place, we need him in order that we may have something to worship; and, in the second place, we need him in order that we may have some one to give us help.

You will notice that I have put the need of worship first. That is not the order which is most familiar, at least in our non-liturgical churches. Worship holds a subordinate place in our scheme of religion. We make place for it, to be sure; we have our hymns and our prayer, but in our estimate of values these hold a subordinate place. We speak of them often (even those of us who are minis-

ters) as the preliminary exercises. Our attention is concentrated upon the sermon as the central feature in the service. We claim to be practical men, and we commend religion because of what it can do for us. It is the helpfulness of God which gives him his chief value in our eyes.

But more careful reflection will convince us that this is a superficial view. The greatest thing that God can do for any of us is simply to be himself. More than any specific thing which he can do *for us* is that which he is *to us*. We need God, I repeat, most of all in order that we may have something to worship, and by that I mean something to look up to, something of which we can feel that it is higher, more powerful, more resourceful, more inspiring, more satisfying and ennobling than we. To have a God is to have an ideal and to know that, however far I may fall below my own stand-

ard or my neighbour may fall below his or all men together may fall below theirs, still somewhere and somehow the ideal is realised and the supreme values that make life worth living will be conserved.

This need of some one greater to look up to and to adore is a universal need. Wherever we look we find that it is present. I have spoken of the witness of modern science to the universality of religion. It is just at this point that the evidence of this universality is most convincing. The difference between man and the animals is found in the fact that man alone has ideals, and the religious nature of man consists in the fact that in his heart of hearts he is persuaded that that which for him is ideal is also in some true sense real.

But, though all men believe in God, there is a great difference in the kind of God in whom men believe. Some men find power the most admirable thing.

The ability to do as one pleases, to carry one's purposes to execution in spite of every opposition, to execute vengeance upon one's enemies, to have one's own will at any cost—this it is which seems to many men most satisfying, and it is this quality which calls forth their wonder, and their admiration in God.

And there are others to whom mystery seems the most divine thing. They love to feel themselves in the presence of some inscrutable being so far surpassing man's capacity to comprehend or understand that his boldest thought turns back baffled from the quest, as the rays of a lantern lose themselves in the encircling fog. This sense of boundlessness, of infinitude, of deeps unfathomed seems to many most wonderful and adorable, and it is the fact that God is such a being which commands their worship.

And to still others righteousness ex-

presses their highest thought of God. God is the being in whom the moral ideal after which we vainly strive here on earth is perfectly realised. God is justice personified, the mind that sees all things in their right relations, and the will that decides unvaryingly according to what it sees.

And to still others, finally, it is unselfishness which seems the most divine thing in the world. God is love, the embodiment and the supreme expression of that passion of self-devotion of which we gain faint gleams in the love of the mother for the child or the sacrifice of the patriot for his country.

It is not enough, then, to speak of God in the abstract. We must go on to define the kind of God in whom we believe. We are interested here in the Christian conception of God, and we wish to know what there is in this conception which calls forth our worship.

But worship is only one side of religion. We need God not only that we may have some one to look up to but that there may be some one to reach down to us as helper and friend. This, too, is a need of universal range. Wherever we go we find men conscious of a lack which man cannot supply. They need guidance, for there are questions which they cannot answer. They need salvation, for there are evils from which they cannot escape. Above all, they need power, for their vitality is constantly drained and must be constantly renewed if they are to meet the responsibilities and bear the burdens that each new day brings, and for this in every age men have turned to that unseen source of supply which we call God.

But here again this common need is consistent with infinite variety of detail. Faith in God has been found among men in every stage of moral and spiritual ex-

perience. The kings of Israel cried to God for help against their enemies, for victory in battle against the Canaanite and the Assyrian. Hezekiah turned to God for the healing of his sickness, and in this he is typical of a great company of men in every age down to the last convert to Christian Science. For others it is forgiveness of sins that is the great need, some assurance that the burden of guilt from which they try in vain to escape will be lifted off and they be restored to self-respect and enabled to begin a new life of freedom and peace. Or, again, it may be power for service that is desired, strength for the unceasing struggle to help men who do not want to be helped, and faith to believe that the struggle will in the end succeed.

How, then, have Christians thought of God as meeting this double need, the need of an object of worship, and the need of a source of help? What was

there in God as Christ had revealed him which satisfied men's need for a realised ideal, and in what ways did the Supreme reach down to make his power practically helpful in daily life?

If we turn to the older devotional literature we find that there were three ways in which God was pictured as satisfying man's need of worship. In the first place, he satisfied it through his majesty. God was a sovereign holding all things in the hollow of his hand, ordering all things by the decree of his will. In the second place, God was righteous. Justice was of the very essence of his being, so inwrought into his nature that he could not do wrong if he would. Finally, God was loving. Righteous as he was, uncompromising in his opposition to evil, terrible in his judgments upon sin, he was yet gracious, tender, ready to forgive those whom he had chosen for himself. So in God all the deepest needs

of man's nature found their answer and satisfaction. And man could be sure that, whatever changes the years might bring, the object of his adoration would never prove less adorable.

And as God furnished man with a satisfying object of worship, so also he was an ever-present source of help. There was no need felt by man for which he had not made full provision. He met the need of guidance. In the Bible he had given a clear revelation of his will and told man in plain words what he was to believe and what he was to do. He met the need of salvation. Through the atonement he had made full provision for the guilt of sin and made possible free forgiveness to all who would lay hold upon it by faith. And, above and beyond all this, he was present in the world by his Spirit, ministering to the needs of his elect in countless ways, calling into existence a new

spiritual life in regeneration, interpreting the Bible to them by the witness of his Spirit, sanctifying them more and more by the renewal of his grace, assuring them of their calling as sons of God, feeding their souls by the means of grace which he had provided in Word and sacraments, and so preparing them at last for their final destiny as children of God in the new life of his kingdom.

Here certainly were great blessings. A religion which could do this for men is not to be despised, and those of us who have been brought up under the old theology and know men and women whose lives have been nourished by the faith it fostered will never be able to speak of its teachings in any other language than that of reverence and tenderness.

But there is another side to the picture which honesty will not suffer us altogether to overlook. These great blessings were bought at a great price. It

was the price of God's universal fatherhood. Between God and man there was a barrier of distance which rendered impossible for men in general that free access to the heavenly Father which is characteristic of the life of children with their parents.

This barrier was twofold. It was in part intellectual and in part moral. Man was separated from God by his ignorance, and he was separated by his sin. What God was like no man could know except by supernatural revelation, and this revelation, theoretically open to all in the Bible, was, in fact, restricted to those to whom God was pleased to grant the witness of his Spirit. To those to whom he had revealed himself through this witness God was indeed a gracious Father, loving and tender, but for the rest of mankind he remained the unknown God or, if known at all, known only as the author of a law which man was help-

less to obey and which, therefore, held in store only nameless terrors. Even to those who had received the divine revelation, the doctrines of the faith remained mysteries into which the mind of man could not penetrate. One must believe that God was three in one, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but how this could be one could not hope to understand, nor indeed did one need to do so.

But formidable as was the obstacle for the mind, the barrier for the conscience was more insurmountable still. Man was separated from God by his sin. God was just, and justice was thought of not as we think of it to-day—as the means which the all-wise and all-loving Father takes to accomplish the moral training of his children. Justice was an independent principle inherent in the divine nature—a principle which not only expressed his opposition to sin but also his separation from the sinner.

Justice was that in God which bound him to punish every least infraction of his law with infinite doom—a doom which no penitence of man could avert, even were perfect penitence in his power. Justice, therefore, so far from being a bond which united man and God, was a barrier keeping them for ever apart unless some method could be found by which God could pass over.

Such a method was, to be sure, provided by God's grace. Through the atonement of Jesus Christ a way was found to blot out the guilt of sin and to make possible the free forgiveness of the sinner. But even here the gain was won at a heavy cost. For, as a result of the conception of justice to which I have already referred, the conception of love itself was perverted. It was no longer an imperious necessity inwrought into the very nature of God, defining the attitude of the Father toward every

one of his children; it was an expression of the principle of sovereignty, the power of arbitrary choice. God was one who had mercy on whom he would have mercy, but who hardened whom he would. As the atonement of Christ was necessary if forgiveness was to be possible, so the divine decree decided for whom this provision should avail. The rest remained in the outer darkness, from which there was no possibility of deliverance.

Now, I am well aware that what I have been saying will seem to many an exaggeration if not a travesty. I know very well that many ministers who hold what they call the old theology have preached a far larger and more generous gospel. I gladly recognise that the presence of God in all human life, the justice of God as an element through which he trains his children, the love of God as the expression of his inmost heart, the deepest and the most profound of all

the truths of Christianity—I gladly recognise, I say, that these great convictions are the monopoly of no single age or school of theologians. In every age men who have studied their Bible and been brought into contact through it with the heart of Jesus Christ have laid hold upon the central truths of the gospel and brought them home with power to the lives of men. My point is simply that it was more difficult to do this a generation ago than it is to-day. There were obstacles in the way of believing in God's universal fatherhood which those who have been trained in the methods of modern science do not feel. The barrier of distance which separated God from his human child has been removed and so the way opened for that intimate and satisfying conception of God which is the supreme gift of Christianity to mankind.

By this I do not mean simply that

modern theology has emphasised the divine immanence. That is true, but irrelevant. We twentieth-century Christians have no monopoly of the doctrine of immanence. Calvin, too, believed that God was everywhere present in his world, and that nothing was independent of his control; yet none the less God seemed to Calvin infinitely remote from multitudes of his creatures. The nearness which I have in mind is not of essence but of character. It shows itself in feeling even more than in action. I mean that there is nothing in God's nature which separates him from any child of man. I mean that God understands man and sympathises with him and longs to do him good. There is no individual and there is no class of men for whom God does not care and whom he does not wish to draw into filial relations with himself.

There are two ways in which the sci-

entific habit has helped to bring God near. It has brought him near to the mind. There is a sense, indeed, in which the result of modern science has been to render us more than ever conscious of our littleness and insignificance. As we have come to realise the vastness of the universe and the intricacy of its mechanism, we have gained a new impression of the greatness and of the wisdom of the being who is its cause. But in another sense, the effect has been just the reverse. Modern science has increased our faith in the intelligibility of the universe and in the trustworthiness of our own faculties as a guide to truth. We have learned that when we approach the world in the spirit of faith and reverence it yields to our advances, that when we treat it as if it were a rational world it lends itself to rational interpretation, and how shall we account for this if not through the presence in and

through nature of a rational cause, a being, in a true sense, like ourselves?

The presence of this common spiritual element, uniting God and man, makes possible the incarnation. The incarnation is the self-revelation of God in man. We believe that through Christ God has shown us what he himself is like and has given us an insight into his character and purpose, which is an adequate guide for the interpretation of his world. And he could do this because of the inner bond of which I have spoken, for if God were a being wholly unlike mankind it would not have been possible for him to have revealed himself to man through man.

But, what is more important still, modern theology has brought God near to the heart. It has removed the element of arbitrariness which has lingered so long in our thought of him. God, as we have come to believe in him to-day, is a

consistent God. He acts according to law; that is to say, he has a uniform method rooted in principles as unchanging as himself. He is not a being who has favourites or who makes exceptions. He does not act according to one principle at one time and according to another principle at another time. He does not deal with some men in terms of justice and with others in terms of love. All that he does is directed to a single end; namely, the establishment of the kingdom of God, which is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." *

This does not mean that modern theology lays less emphasis upon the justice of God than the theology of the past, but only that it conceives it in a different way. Justice is that quality in God which expresses his inherent love of righteousness as it appears in his dealings with individual men. It is manifest in

* Romans 14 : 17.

his opposition to sin as long as sin continues, but it is shown no less clearly in his forgiveness of sin when true repentance makes forgiveness possible. It makes use of punishment, indeed—a punishment as inexorable as sin and as terrible—but punishment is never an end in itself. It is the means which love uses to accomplish its supreme end—the salvation of men and their union, one with another and with God, in the righteous life of the kingdom.

So, in many ways, modern theology has helped to clarify and purify our conception of God. It retains all that is inspiring and satisfying in the older view while avoiding the difficulties to which it was exposed. It offers us an object of worship august and wonderful enough to satisfy every demand of the emotional nature. Is it a question of majesty? What could be more majestic than God as we apprehend him to-day? God is

the infinite Spirit who informs and inhabits the universe—life of its life, light of its light, directing all things, according to the counsel of his will, to the far-off divine event which he has planned as the goal of all conscious life. Is it a question of righteousness? God is righteous and the exacter of righteousness in others. He has set a standard to which he requires that all men and all nations shall conform, and that standard is the character of Christ. But, above all, God is loving—loving even as Christ is loving, loving by the inner necessity of his nature, and willingly paying through all eternity the cost that true love always exacts of the lover. What can heart desire which such a God cannot supply? Still we can sing with Watts:

"Our God, our help in ages past;
Our hope in years to come,
Our refuge from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home,"

or with Bowring:

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride."

Now, it is clear that if we have such a God as this he ought to mean more in our lives than ever before. We ought to be looking up to him more constantly, counting upon him more certainly, turning to him in every crisis of our lives for the help that we need.

But is this really true? Is it a fact that God means more in our life to-day than he meant in the life of our fathers? Do we turn to him more constantly for help? Are we as conscious of his presence as the outstanding factor in our lives?

I am afraid that if we were to give a truthful answer to this question it would have to be in the negative. One of the noticeable features of our day is the de-

cline of personal religion in the old sense of the term, the loss of that sense of personal intimacy between God and his child which was so characteristic a feature of the older religion. We talk a great deal about God; we think about him not a little; but we do not feel him as real and as near as Luther did or Wesley, not to speak of Isaiah or St. Paul.

Here is a situation which demands our most serious consideration. Those who base their teaching upon external authority may insist that they are right, however much their doctrines may seem to contradict experience; but a theology which makes practice the test of truth must stand or fall by its fruits in life. Unless the new thought of God issues in a richer experience of God it is self-condemned.

I have been trying as best I could to discover the reason for the decline of

personal religion. In part, no doubt, it is a result of the increased pressure of life. Activity is the characteristic note of the modern world. Almost every day a new society is formed to render some new service or to meet some new need. On every side we hear the complaint that people are so busy they have no time to stop and think. The quiet hours that parents used to spend with their children, the time sacredly reserved for family worship or for the reading of the Bible Sunday afternoon, is crowded out by other duties which seem more pressing.

And it is not simply that we have found so much to do, but we have found so much that we are able to do. This new social and philanthropic activity has justified itself by its fruits. We have discovered that many of the evils which we once thought irremediable are capable of cure if only we set our hands to the task. And there is nothing which appeals to

a normal man or woman like work that is effective for an object that is worth while. So the very success of our practical efforts at helpfulness has, for the time, turned our thoughts away from those deeper needs which in every age have driven men to God and kept alive in human hearts the flame of personal religion.

But, after all, the real reason for the decline of which I have been speaking lies deeper. We cannot seriously give ourselves to the task of trying to help our fellow men without, sooner or later, realising our limitations. For a time we may be content to deal with the ills that lie on the surface, to better housing conditions, to foster habits of saving, to provide opportunities of healthful amusement and the like, but presently we find that these things go only a little way. There are deeper needs which cannot thus be met—needs of inward renewal,

of the transformation of character, of deliverance from selfishness and pettiness and the tyranny of habit; the need of inner contentment and peace, of a larger outlook, of a more satisfying ambition. And when we try to meet these deeper needs we soon discover how limited our resources are, and are driven back for help to God, like all those who have attempted the same tasks before us.

And this brings me to a second reason for the decline of which I have spoken, one far more fundamental and far-reaching. It is not simply that we have been too busy to seek help from God, but that we have not been sure that God could give us the help we needed even if we were to ask him.

For what is it that we need of God? It is such help as a man would give his fellow man—help direct, individual, personal, differing from moment to moment, from hour to hour, according to our dif-

fering needs. That is the kind of help for which our fathers turned to God and which they were conscious of receiving from him. If he was apart from the world, transcendent, as we call it in our theological speech, it was only that he might be able the better to express his individuality and to exercise his freedom. I have spoken of the gulf that yawned between God and his creature, but it was a gulf which God could cross at any moment if he would, and which, as a matter of fact, he was constantly crossing. All that was necessary to do was to cry to God in prayer and one could be sure that the needed help would be forthcoming.

But with the world which modern science reveals it is different. God is a God of law; that is to say, he acts everywhere and always in the same way. How can we feel the sense of communion with such a God that we do with

our fellow men? Are we told that God is near? That is just the trouble. He is too near for us to realise his presence. Are we told that he is always the same? But it is not uniformity we want. Our need is always changing and the helper we need must meet these constant changes with a change as constant.

It is a very real difficulty that I am voicing. It lies back of the wide-spread attack upon the new theology as denying the supernatural and making no place for miracles. What this attack really means is the fear that if the new view of God comes to prevail the old sense of personal intimacy which characterised the religion of the past must die out, that vague feelings of awe and worship will replace that communion of will with will which is essential to the continuance of vital religion.

Now, if this fear were justified, I for one should feel that those who attacked

modern theology as destructive were quite in the right. We need not only a God to worship from afar but a God who can help us where we need to be helped, in the changing trials and responsibilities and dangers of our changing lives. And the test by which every theology—whether old or new—must stand or fall is its ability to provide for the satisfaction of this need.

We face, then, this curious situation, that while the *conception of God* as presented in modern theology is winning and attractive, just the kind of God we should love to have as Father and Friend, *the conception of God's relation to the world* is such that we find it difficult to draw the legitimate consequences of our belief, in practical helpfulness. How is this anomaly to be explained?

The root of the whole difficulty, I am persuaded, lies in the ambiguity of the term "law." Law means uniformity,

but we forget that there are two kinds of uniformity. There is uniformity of action and uniformity of method, and it makes all the difference in the world which of the two we mean. Uniformity of action is inconsistent with personality. It is the uniformity of the machine which always does the same thing because it has no option. If God be a God of law in this sense it would, indeed, be useless to turn to him for help, for he could not help us if he would. For him, as for the world in which he dwells, law would be a prison from which he could not escape.

But we may use the word "law" in quite a different sense. We may use it to describe uniformity of method rather than uniformity of action. So far from being inconsistent with personality, uniformity of this kind is the highest expression of personality. It is the mark of a consistent character that it knows

how to shape means to ends and can be trusted under any conceivable set of circumstances to do the thing that is right. The man who is under law in this sense will be constantly varying his action to meet the varying exigency, but the change will always be determined by principle and will lead, therefore, to results on which you can always count.

It is just so with God. When we say that he acts according to law we mean that all that he does is determined by a single consistent purpose. It is not that his acts never vary but that his aim never varies. He has but one object, and that is to establish the kingdom of God in the world which he has made by bringing the men and women who are its inhabitants into willing conformity to the character of Jesus Christ.

How is this purpose to be brought

about? In the very same way in which Christians have always contended that it must be brought about—by *changing* whatever in the present order of things and in the lives of living men and women is inconsistent with this purpose; in other words, by new beginnings or what our fathers were accustomed to call miracles. A miracle is an exceptional event wrought by God in the world for a moral purpose. It is the evidence of the presence in the world of a personal Spirit directing its course to a spiritual end.

It is a great mistake to think that modern theology has no place for miracle. Modern science has, indeed, banished a certain conception of miracle, the conception which regards it as a purely arbitrary and isolated event without antecedents or consequences, a marvel or portent contradicting natural law or, at least, wholly unrelated to it. But in the sense in which we have just de-

fined it as a new beginning which evidences to man in a peculiar sense the presence and the purpose of God, modern science shows us more clearly than ever before how indispensable it is for religion. All progress takes place through new beginnings. A new form appears not wholly to be explained by its antecedents but prophetic of that which is to come after. A great man appears and sets a new standard for all succeeding generations. A flash of insight illumines the soul and through years to come we walk by the light of the heavenly vision. Saul is struck down before the gate of Damascus and the persecutor is changed into the apostle. Jesus is born in a tiny province of the Roman Empire and we date a new era in the history of mankind.

How shall we account for phenomena like these? What is their significance and meaning in the universe? This is a

question which science cannot answer. It is concerned with causes, not with values. It registers the appearance of the new fact. It can determine the conditions under which it arose and describe the consequences which followed from it, but the why and wherefore is hidden from its ken. Critical scholarship may tell us who wrote the books of the Bible and when they wrote them. It may explain the literary forms they used and catalogue the materials upon which they drew. But when it has done all this it is as far as ever from explaining the influence which the Bible has exerted upon the spiritual life of man. How came it that in its pages men have heard God speaking directly to their own souls; how account for the persistence of its influence over so many centuries and among men of such widely different races? Religion answers, it is because God is really speaking to men in the

book which he has prepared for this very purpose. And this discovery of God in events and experiences which to men without the clew seem destitute of spiritual significance lies at the heart of the religious faith in miracle.

The difficulty in the older attitude toward miracle was not that men found God actively at work in the great creative personalities and events which accompanied the birth of the new religion, but that they concentrated their attention upon his presence there to the exclusion of his activity elsewhere. They tried to draw a hard-and-fast line between the miracles of the Bible and God's methods of self-disclosure to men of other races and other ages. They failed to recognise, or, at all events, adequately to emphasise, the fact that God is as truly present, if in different degree and for different purposes, in our present experience as in the experience of the past;

that he is as able to-day as ever to make new disclosures of his will and to give new evidence of his power. What we need to do is to realise afresh the continuity of God's redemptive activity; not to see less of him in the past but to expect more from him in the present and in the future.

Now, the most familiar example of God's creative activity in the present is prayer. Prayer is the way in which the soul of man is renewed through contact with God. Here again modern theology has not altered the facts though it has set them in a new light. Through its revelation of the divine consistency it has removed the element of arbitrariness which often attached to the older conception of prayer. It assures us that when we draw near to God in the spirit of faith we may confidently expect response; that it is as true to-day as in the days of Isaiah and of St. Paul that

through prayer we have access to the source of all power and renew our lives from day to day.

I have in mind a dear friend, now no longer among the living, about whose memory many associations cluster. A natural leader of men, far-sighted, wise in counsel, exquisite in tact, untiring in industry, he was, in the truest sense of the term, a man of affairs. But I think of him most of all as a man of prayer. More than once during a season of anxiety and strain I have seen him come into the seminary chapel to lead the morning's worship, and as he prayed I have seen his face change before my eyes and grow buoyant and radiant under the renewing influence which came to him from communion with his God. Cuthbert Hall is to many a Union Seminary student a personal embodiment of that sonnet of Trench's which he loved to quote:

"Lo, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in thy presence will prevail to make,
What heavy burdens from our bosom take.
What parched grounds revive, as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel, how weak: we rise, how full of power!"

What we need, then, above all, we who call ourselves Christians, is to learn from Jesus how to pray. Jesus realised as keenly as any of us moderns the duty of service. All day long he went about doing good. He was tireless in his ministry to the needy in body and spirit, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, comforting the sorrowing, forgiving the sinful, but he knew that he could give only what he had received. And so when night fell he left his disciples and went up into the mountain or shut his

closet door that in secret he might commune with the Father who seeth in secret. It is what his disciples must do if we are to recover again for our generation the consciousness of God as the central fact and the supreme good, the unfailing source of strength and of wisdom, of inspiration and of comfort, of peace and of joy.

IV

FROM WHAT AND TO WHAT ARE WE SAVED?

The subject which is next to engage our attention differs from those which we have been considering thus far in that it deals with a need of which every one has direct and first-hand evidence. When we took up the Bible we began by asking why we need a Bible, and it was necessary to do this for there are people who do not seem to think we do. It is a fact—a lamentable fact—that for a great many people to-day the Bible is an all but unknown book. If they were in trouble it would never occur to them to go to it for help. If they were in perplexity it would never occur to them

to go to it for guidance. They seldom read it. If you were to quote a familiar text they could not tell you from what book it came. It is more than likely that they would not even know that it came from the Bible at all. For all practical purposes the Bible has completely passed out of their lives.

It is so with the second great need of which we spoke—the need of God. Here, too, there are people who, so far as outward evidence is concerned, are unaware of their need. They are not conscious of God's presence in their lives. He is not a factor with which they feel they must reckon in the solution of their problems. They never pray. They do not go to church. They tell us that they believe in the religion of kindness and that Nature is a good enough church for them.

If, then, we wish to commend our religion to people of this kind we must begin

by showing why it is important to read the Bible and to believe in God. We must show that these fixed points in our Christian faith and practice are not arbitrary but have found their place necessarily in answer to deep-seated human needs, needs that require only to be pointed out to be recognised.

But in the case of our present subject no such preliminary explanation is necessary, for everybody who is old enough to know anything knows what it means to need salvation. Salvation means deliverance, help. It is the promise of relief from the evil of which life is full, the assurance of well-being and safety. To ask from what and to what we are saved is to ask from what evil we need to be delivered and what consequences we may expect to follow from the deliverance. This is a question of universal human interest. If you do not believe it, read the advertisement columns in the daily

papers, or, better still, the magazines, with their long list of remedies for the countless ills to which flesh is heir. Listen to the conversation of any group of men and women who know one another well enough to talk of the subjects that interest them most, and you will find that they are talking about the need of salvation—either their own or somebody else's. They do not call it by that name, to be sure, but that is what they mean. There is no one, I repeat, old enough to know anything who has not faced, in his own experience, the fact of evil and learned what it means to need deliverance. In every age, religion has made its most direct and persuasive appeal through its promise of help to people who were in trouble—in other words, because it has offered men salvation.

I have a friend, a man of singularly fine and unselfish feeling, who tells me that he thinks this matter of preach-

ing salvation has been greatly overdone. Religion, he declares, is constantly presented as if it were a sort of medicine, a patent remedy, warranted to heal sickness and to cure sin, or, if not that, as a kind of life-insurance policy guaranteeing the insurer against the danger of loss and safeguarding him against the effects of his own misconduct and folly and that of others. But such a conception of religion, my friend holds, is altogether unworthy of its dignity. Religion is not something for the sick merely but for the well; not for the weak but for the strong; not for the sinful but for the righteous. Religion is the way by which we enter into the highest life possible and develop our capacities to the utmost. Religion is something for men at the height of their power and in the zenith of their prosperity, not simply for the hour of failure or the day of death. Religion is joy rather than comfort, ful-

ness of life rather than safety, service rather than salvation.

I have much sympathy with this point of view. In our desire to help men in their troubles we often overlook the positive aspects of our religion. We greatly need the kind of preaching of which my friend speaks—preaching that will emphasise the virile and heroic aspects of Christianity; preaching that will present religion as a generous and satisfying life, the one adequate outlet for the energies that in most of us are but half used; preaching that will sound the note of adventure and enthusiasm such as was struck by James Chalmers, Robert Louis Stevenson's friend, when he wrote:

> We want men who think preaching and living the Gospel to the heathen the grandest work on earth. We want men who will thoroughly enjoy all kinds of roughing it, who will be glad when ease and comfort can be had, but who will look upon all that comes

as only the pepper and salt giving zest to work and creating the appetite for more.*

But while this is true, and we cannot emphasise it too strongly, it is not all the truth. Whatever may be the case in the bright future to which we look forward by and by when the Spirit of Christ shall be everywhere victorious and God's will be done on earth as it is done in heaven, here and now certainly men are the victims of sickness and sorrow and sin and death and failure in all its countless and heart-breaking forms. However much *more* there may be in religion than the word salvation expresses, it remains true that if we are to reach men at the point of their present need here is where we must begin.

But though we should all agree as to the need of salvation, we should find it less easy to agree as to the particular evil from which men most need to be

* "Autobiography," p. 214.

saved. For there are so many kinds of evil. There are evils which attack us from without and evils which have their seat within. There are evils which affect us as individuals and there are social evils. There are ills of the body and ills of the mind. There is ignorance; there is sorrow; there is sickness; there are failure and misfortune; and there is the great family of evils which have their source in a perverted will. Clearly, if we are to help people intelligently, we must decide which need is greatest and where salvation is to begin.

Here the preachers of a generation ago had a great advantage, for they knew just what they were trying to do. With most of the evils of which we have been speaking they were not concerned —at least, not primarily. Their special ministry was to the soul of man. It was their aim to set men right with God. The salvation they preached was from

sin and the punishment which was its inevitable consequence.

Study the career of any one of the older revivalists and you cannot help being impressed with the businesslike way in which he set about his work. The first thing that he attempted to do when he came to a new place was to make his hearers realise their absolute helplessness apart from God. He began by preaching the law. He warned men of the inevitable consequences of their sin, and only when he saw that they had been brought to a proper sense of the seriousness of their condition was he ready to follow up the first impression with the message of forgiveness and peace.

And not only did the preacher know what he was trying to do, *but the people knew, too.* We used to hear a great deal when I was a boy about the way of salvation. It was a way that had been trodden so many times that it was pos-

sible for any one who wished to take it to know just where he was going. People might not choose to go, but they knew where the way was, and they had no doubt that if they followed it it would take them where they wanted to go.

If we look more closely at the salvation which the old revivalists preached we find that it had two characteristics. In the first place, it was salvation from punishment; in the second place, it was salvation from a punishment which was to be inflicted by and by.

This does not mean, of course, that deliverance from punishment was the whole of the preacher's message. He knew as well as we that the evil of evils is sin itself. Indeed, the worst punishment which God could inflict upon a man was simply to let him continue in his sin. But to his thought punishment was something independent of sin and added to it, something from which a man

needed to be delivered for its own sake even after he had turned from his sin. It was not enough to repent in order to be forgiven, even if you were able to do so, which you were not. There was a necessity in the nature of God which required that past sin should be punished, and it was because it provided a way of escape from this punishment that the preaching of the atonement brought such relief to tortured spirits.

But it was not simply punishment from which men needed to be delivered, but future punishment. The great day of reckoning to which the soul looked forward was not in this life but in the life to come. For a time, to be sure, the wicked might flourish like the green bay-tree, but in the end his doom was sure. When death came he would be brought to the bar of divine judgment and face the great alternative of heaven or hell.

Here, too, we must be on our guard against exaggeration. Many descriptions of the older preaching of future punishment fail to do justice to its spiritual profundity. The older preachers realised as well as we that the true hell is not without but within. It is separation from the comfortable presence of God here and hereafter. None the less, it is true that in their thought of this separation they had the future rather than the present in mind. They were thinking not so much of present deliverance from sin as of escape from those torments of mind and body which awaited the impenitent after death. The message of the preacher was that of Evangelist to Christian: "Flee from the wrath to come."

Here, then, we have a perfectly definite programme. The minister of an earlier day, I repeat, knew just what he wanted to do. If you had asked him for his

answer to our present question: From what and to what are we saved? his answer would have been instant and precise: We are saved from hell and to heaven.

There are many people to-day who no longer find this answer satisfying. A change has come over their thought, but, above all, over their feeling, of which the thoughtful preacher is obliged to take account.

This change is due to two causes. It is due partly to a change in our conception of punishment and partly to a new sense of the importance of the present life.

I have already had occasion to refer in another connection to the change which has taken place in our conception of justice. We no longer think of it as something which exacts punishment for its own sake. We think of justice as a means of bringing about right relations

between man and his fellow man and punishment as one among other instruments to be used for that purpose. According to this view, punishment is not something from which we need to be saved. It is itself the means of our salvation. Instead of being the vindication of an abstract principle of right it is a tool put into our hands for the discipline and reformation of the offender. We have found in our prisons and our reformatories that when we treat men fairly, kindly, and hopefully they respond to our treatment, and we see no reason why, when we are persuaded that their lives have been changed, they should not be restored to society. We do not believe that God is less good than man, and so it is natural for us to think of him, too, as making justice the instrument of his love.

But it is not simply that we have a different conception of punishment.

Our whole perspective has altered. The other-worldly Christianity of another generation has yielded to a view of religion which is primarily concerned with the life that now is. We wish a salvation for to-day—a salvation which can deal with the specific evils of whose presence we are most conscious here and now: political evils like injustice, economic evils like poverty, physical evils like disease. It is not enough to believe that individuals here and there may be delivered from their present sinful environment. We wish to be assured that the environment itself is to be transformed into one that will favour and not hinder freedom and progress.

Into the causes of this change I need not enter here. In part it is due to a clearer recognition of the unity of life. We have learned for one thing that there is no such thing as a purely isolated individual, that we are literally

members one of another, so involved with the men and women by our side, in a hundred complex relationships, that it is absolutely impossible for us to separate our interests from theirs. We have learned, too, how intimately and in how many ways the spiritual graces we value most highly are rooted in the homely soil of economic opportunity. We see that drunkenness and immorality are not simply sins of individuals. They are symptoms of an unsound social order, and so we are shifting our point of attack. We are trying not merely to save individual drunkards and prostitutes, but to create such social standards and habits as will make their existence for ever impossible, and in our devotion to this engrossing task we have lost sight for the moment of the more distant future for which the present is a preparation.

I am not concerned here with passing judgment upon the change but simply

with registering the fact. We may admit that there is a truth in the older view of punishment which many of us have dismissed too lightly. If punishment is really to reform, it must be recognised by the one who receives it as just. Take away its inevitableness and you impair its disciplinary value. The lawlessness which is so serious a menace to our social and political life is due in no small part to the fact that so many men have lost the sense of accountability to an authority which cannot be evaded.

We may admit, too, that any gospel of salvation which confines itself to the present merely and does not take into account the longer future is bound, in the long run, to prove unsatisfying. The richer and fuller we make life here, the more we put into it of spiritual meaning and value, the less we shall be content with the thought of its ultimate cessation. But, however this may be, the

fact remains that in both the respects to which I have referred there has been a change of emphasis with which we must reckon. Even if we do not feel it ourselves others do. There are many people for whom the old form of appeal has lost its force, and if our preaching of salvation is to be effective we must have some clear-cut message to take its place. What shall that message be?

This brings us to the first of our two questions: From what are we saved? The older answer was: "We are saved from punishment." In contrast to this, it would seem natural to say that we are saved from sin. If the older preaching was at fault in making too much of the consequences, let us go back to the cause. Sin, at least, is a present fact whose existence every one recognises, and no one will deny that we need to be saved from it.

But the trouble with this answer is

that it is too vague. No doubt, every one will admit that we need to be saved from sin in general, but our trouble begins when we try to deal with sins in detail. How can we tell whether any particular act is a sin? Is there any principle which will determine this for us?

This is a question which comes home with increasing force to every conscientious Christian. One of the most striking facts in the social life of to-day is the breaking down of standards. The definite rules in which the older ethics formulated the ideal of human conduct can no longer count on an undivided public opinion. This is not necessarily due to any lack of moral sensitiveness. It is due in part to the growing complexity of modern life. New conditions are constantly arising which could not be foreseen; new factors entering the field which must be taken into account. I am not thinking simply of the changes

which affect our individual standards, such as the new economic conditions which have modified our attitude toward Sunday observance, or the new attitude toward intellectual inquiry which has been the result of modern science. I am thinking of a whole group of sins which have grown out of the new social and economic environment, for which the older ethics made no explicit provision—the sins of the corporation, for example, sins for which we can hold no single individual exclusively responsible because we all alike share the responsibility. We need some principle at once definite and flexible which will unify our thinking and act as a positive guide in the new conditions which we face today.

Such a principle modern theology gives us in its teaching concerning the normative significance of Jesus Christ. Sin, it tells us, is any departure either on the

part of the individual or of society from the standard he has established. Sin is unchristlikeness, and that is only another way of saying that it is selfishness. Sin is the preference from motives of self-indulgence of any other end for the supreme end which Christ has revealed, namely, the kingdom of God.

Such a definition helps us in two ways. In the first place, it gives us a general principle, simple enough to be easily intelligible, yet at the same time comprehensive enough to take in all forms of evil; and, in the second place, it helps us to deal with specific evils by showing us wherein their real evil consists.

Take, for example, that old vice of intemperance, which has been the text of so many sermons. What is the real sin of drunkenness which makes it an offence in the sight of God? There is a sin against the individual, no doubt, in the evil consequences in body and mind

which come to the offender himself. But there is a greater sin against society. The worst evil of the drink habit consists in the consequences which follow from it for others. It consists in the temptation which it puts in the way of those who have not the strength to resist. It consists in the decreased social efficiency of the men who have formed the habit, the fact that they are no longer so effective as workers, so responsible in positions of trust, so lovable and dependable as husbands and fathers; in the fact, in short, that they are no longer able worthily to fill their places in the great family of God.

It is so with all the other sins which are commonly catalogued as individual, such as gambling or impurity. The evil in each case includes not only the effect produced upon the man himself but the social consequences which follow from it. It is the fact that the self-indulgence

which the habit fosters is bound to bear fruit in cruelty, misery, and degradation.

But our principle has a much wider application. It bears not only upon the individual sins which formed the staple of the older preaching but upon those newer forms of social sin which have grown out of the new conditions of our modern industrial life. It gives us a principle by which we can judge social practice everywhere. Does it advance or hinder the kingdom of God? Is it an expression of brotherhood or its repudiation? Here is a wide field into which our present plan will not allow us to go in detail. It includes whatever affects the social welfare and efficiency of the people: the method of producing wealth and of distributing it, the conditions of housing and of education, the prevalence of social habits and standards—all, in short, that is either uplifting or debasing in a community.

Some years ago the country was stirred by the accounts of a lynching in a Northern State, where a wounded negro under trial for his life was taken by force from his bed in a hospital by a mob of armed men, carried to a public place in the neighbourhood, and burned to death in the presence of a crowd of more than four thousand people, none of whom made any protest or attempt at rescue. How shall we judge such an occurrence from the Christian standpoint? What is the sin which calls for national repentance? Not simply that the thing was done but that conditions existed which made it possible. The sin was not simply the sin of the men who piled the faggots or set the torch, not simply of the men who looked on with approval or at least acquiescence, but of the whole community in which there had grown up a spirit of brutality and lawlessness which made possible such an outbreak.

It was the sin of the churches which had failed in their preaching of brotherhood; it was the sin of the schools which had failed in their teaching of responsibility; it was the sin of the government which had failed in its enforcement of order; it was the sin of all of us whose omissions and commissions go to make up that mysterious force which we call public opinion and which here, as so often in the past, had proved itself impotent for good. If we had been the men we should have been the evil thing could never have happened. The salvation we need—the salvation which is to deliver us from our real sin—cannot stop with the surface evils which show themselves openly in the body politic but must attack the unchristlikeness which is their underlying cause.

We have answered the first half of our question: From what are we saved? We are to be saved from unchristlike-

ness, which is selfishness. But our task is incomplete until we have answered the second part as well: To what are we saved? Here again the answer is clear. We are to be saved to Christlikeness, which means saviourhood.

This idea of salvation to service is no new idea. You will find it splendidly expressed in Luther's great tract *On Christian Liberty*. "A Christian man," says Luther, "is the most free lord of all men and subject to none. A Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all and subject to every one."* He is free since Christ has saved him; he is servant since it is his part to be a Christ to others. Yet, closely as the two aspects of the Christian life are connected, they are independent. Service, to Luther, is something added to salvation, not a part of salvation itself. Salvation is complete when the saved man knows

* Wace's ed., 1883, p. 104.

himself forgiven through Jesus Christ. Service is the life that follows as a consequence of this forgiveness. It is the way the Christian takes of showing his thankfulness for having been saved.

To understand the significance of this distinction we must remember Luther's situation. He was facing a church that taught salvation by works, and he wished to make it perfectly clear that salvation was not something which a man could earn by his own merits but must come to him as a free gift. Salvation was the renewal of fellowship with God that came with the consciousness of forgiveness. It was filial confidence, the upward look of the child to the father. Salvation, in a word, was sonship.

This is the meaning of that old doctrine of justification by faith which has so often been misunderstood. Justification by faith is the theologian's way of saying what Jesus meant when he talked

about the childlike spirit; namely, that in the last analysis salvation is of God and must be received in humility and trust. It was to safeguard this great truth against the assaults of legalism in every form that the Reformers and their successors were so careful to distinguish between justification and sanctification—between salvation, which is forgiveness, and its consequence, which is service.

But we see to-day that the connection is even closer. Service is not something added to salvation as its consequence; it is a part of salvation itself. You cannot love God as Christ has revealed him without beginning to love your fellow man. For the very heart of Christ's revelation is that God, who loves me, loves my neighbour also. Sonship and brotherhood are wrapped up together as parts of one and the same experience. The test of being saved oneself is that one begins to save others.

This insistence upon the indissoluble connection between salvation and service is the characteristic note of our modern Christianity. It is not simply that we have come to see that we cannot have a salvation for the individual alone, but that we should not be satisfied with that kind of salvation even if we could get it. We are beginning to realise so vividly the ties that unite us to the men and women all about us who are struggling for a larger and a fuller life that we cannot be content with any solution of our own problem which does not bring deliverance to them.

But when we ask ourselves what we can do to help these brothers of ours we find less clearness. We are saved to be saviours. But what does it mean to be a saviour? From what and to what are we who have been saved to save others? Clearly from the same evil from which we have been saved ourselves. We are

to save men from unchristlikeness, which is selfishness, to Christlikeness, which means saviourhood.

When we bring our modern Christianity to this test the result is less satisfactory. There is an immense amount of activity among Christians. From morning till night, and often far into the night, we are at work with our clubs and our societies and our committee meetings. There is no one of all the long list of ills at which we glanced a moment ago which is not being somewhere and somehow attacked. But the results do not seem commensurate with the effort. The forces of the enemy multiply faster than we can shoot them down. The weeds grow faster than we can pull them up. And the reason is not far to seek. We are dealing with consequences rather than with causes, with symptoms rather than with the disease. In our own way we are repeat-

ing the mistake of the older preachers, who tried to save men from punishment rather than from sin. All these evils of which we have been speaking are the effects of one fundamental and deep-seated evil—the radical selfishness of the human heart. We shall never have men really saved till we have saved them from this. How are we to do it?

Well, how were we saved ourselves? What was it that delivered us from the bondage of our own self-love and introduced us to the life of service? This is a very searching question, for it pierces to the very roots of our being and forces us to ask ourselves anew how far we are saved ourselves—saved, I mean, in the full Christian sense of that great word. It is a question which each must answer for himself, in the solitude of his own soul. But I am sure of one thing—that so far as we can truthfully answer it in the affirmative we shall con-

fess that what saved us was some one's love. There is only one way to produce love, and that is by loving. "We love," says the apostle, "because he first loved us." *

This doctrine of salvation by love is the characteristic feature of the Christian religion. Ever since we were children we have been told that God is love: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." † We have heard the words so often that they have almost ceased to convey any meaning to us. To appreciate what such a phrase as salvation by love really means when applied to God we have to make a distinct effort of the imagination.

What does it mean to love in the sense in which Jesus used the term? It means to respect another's individuality. It means

* John 4 : 19. † John 3 : 16.

to make the interests of another your own interests, his fortune your fortune, his welfare your welfare. It means to desire earnestly his highest good. It means to carry him on your heart hour by hour, day by day, year by year.

That was what gave Jesus his great power over men. He was the great lover. He was always thinking about other people's welfare. He went about doing good. He healed the sick, he fed the hungry, he comforted the sad, he forgave the sinful, he taught the ignorant. But these, after all, were only symptoms of something deeper. Jesus *cared* for men. He believed in their capacity for infinite development. He carried them on his heart as the shepherd carries his sheep.

Now, the Bible tells us that this is what God is always doing. He is doing a thousand things for us, supplying our physical needs through the bounties of

Nature, ministering to our sense of beauty by sunrise and evening star, guiding our consciences by the warnings of his Spirit, rousing us to new activity by the call of duty or the spur of danger—in countless ways, by his overshadowing providence, making life the wonderful and fascinating thing it is; but, above and beyond all this, he *cares* for us. He carries us on his heart as the good father carries his children. He is the great Shepherd of our souls.

And that is what he wants us to do for one another. It is a good thing to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked and visit the prisoner—nay, it is a necessary thing. Jesus has told us that they are his representatives and that when we minister to them we are ministering to him. But without love, what is our ministering worth? "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and

have not love, it profiteth me nothing."* There is a worse evil than thirst from which men need deliverance—a worse evil than cold, a worse evil than imprisonment, a worse evil than nakedness, and that is selfishness, and the only thing that can save from this is love.

Near one of our great cities there is a reformatory for girls. It was the outgrowth of the efforts of a good woman who believed that the indiscriminate association of first offenders with hardened criminals was responsible for the destruction of many lives which might be saved to usefulness and self-respect. From the first the reformatory has been singularly fortunate in its management. It has been free from the curse of politics. It has secured the most highly trained women for its positions of responsibility, and its record of lives saved and characters transformed is a most encourag-

* I Cor. 13 : 3.

ing witness to what can be accomplished by the resources of modern science and modern philanthropy.

To this reformatory there came one day a girl with whom the superintendent and teachers could do nothing. Handsome, strong, intelligent, she was utterly reckless and self-willed, and much of the time it was necessary to keep her under physical restraint to prevent her from doing injury to herself and others. Her story, as it was subsequently learned, was the familiar story of early mismanagement resulting in the exaggeration of the evils it was designed to cure. "Kate," her parents used to say, "if you do this we'll kill you." "But I very soon found," she said, "that they did not kill me, and I determined that the way to have my own way was to have it, and I did." Against this ingrained self-will all the resources of the institution were tried in vain. Kindness and stern-

ness, gentleness and force were equally ineffective, and all who had to do with Kate were in despair.

One night a message came to the superintendent from the matron in charge of the cottage where Kate was living to come over at once, as the girl was rebellious and her outcries were keeping all the other inmates awake. When the superintendent came she found Kate in handcuffs, sitting on the floor, since she had torn everything in the room to pieces. Like a wild animal she tossed from side to side, screaming in such a way that rest was impossible for any one within range of her voice. The superintendent entered the room, sat down beside her on the floor, and tried to coax or reason her into a better frame of mind. At last, exhausted in body and worn out in spirit, she lost her self-control and, before she realised what she was doing, burst into tears. In-

stantly Kate stopped screaming and for some time sat regarding her companion in silence. At last she spoke. "Miss Smith," she asked, "are you crying?" "Yes, Kate," the superintendent answered. "Why are you crying?" Kate continued. "I am crying because of you, to think that after all my effort I am unable to do anything for your good." Again there was silence. Then Kate said abruptly: "Miss Smith, that is the first time in my life that any one ever shed a tear for me. This breaks my heart; I cannot stand it. You can take the handcuffs off. You won't have any more trouble with me."

The superintendent took her at her word. The handcuffs were removed and the miracle was wrought. Not instantly or without many a struggle and some failures, yet certainly the wild beast was tamed, the devil cast out, and Kate, once the despair of the institution, be-

came the mainstay of superintendent and matron in dealing with the new cases that baffled them. "Leave her to me," she would say. "I know how she feels; I can deal with her." And she did. The saved had become a saviour, and a saviour she remains to this day.

It is the old story of redemptive love. You can hear its like in any rescue mission. But the interesting thing about the story and the reason I have told it here is that it did not happen at a rescue mission but at a State reformatory, which is the latest word in scientific philanthropy. When everything had been tried that science could suggest, the old doctor, Love, was called in and wrought the cure.

This does not mean that modern methods are useless; that we have nothing to learn from the new philanthropy as to how to help men and women in their need. You will surely not so far

misunderstand me. Love cannot work in a vacuum. Like every other workman, it needs tools, and the better the tools the better it can work. The inspiring thing about the whole scientific movement is that it has so mightily enlarged our capacity for service by showing us how many more things we can do than we had supposed to help people in their need. But, after all, all these things are tools. Mighty as the instruments of love, in and of themselves they are impotent. It is as true to-day as when Christ lived and died that the only sure way to save is to love.

Now, love is the most costly thing in the world. It cost Christ Calvary, and every one who shares Christ's spirit and gives himself to his work will find that he, too, will have to pay the price. "If any man would come after me," said Jesus, "let him deny himself and take up

his cross and follow me."* It is a law of life that we can have only what we pay for, and the things that are most valuable cost most.

That is the meaning of the doctrine of the atonement—that great truth which lies at the heart of the Christian religion. It is the expression of the fact that the law of cost is valid for God as well as for man. God, too, can have only what he pays for; and for him, too, the things which he values most highly cost most. God could not save without loving, and he could not love without suffering. Even before Christ came Isaiah had grasped this great secret when he wrote of God: "In all their afflictions he was afflicted; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them and carried them all the days of old."† God is the great sufferer because he is the great lover. Atonement is not some-

* Mark 9 : 34. † Isaiah 63 : 9.

thing which happens outside of God to make forgiveness possible. *Atonement is something which happens in God.* It was what it cost God to bear the world's sin, your sin and mine.

Religion is fellowship with God, and fellowship means unity in thought, in purpose, and in feeling. To be a Christian means to make God's point of view one's own—to feel toward men as he feels toward them; to desire for them what he desires for them; to care for them so much that one is willing to suffer for them—nay, to love them so much that one cannot help suffering for them when one sees them fail of their highest good.

This does not mean that we are to go through life heavy-hearted, as though the burden of the world's salvation rested upon our shoulders, as though God's redemption needed some supplement that our suffering must supply. It does not

mean that we shall always be looking on the dark side of life, that we are to be blind to the joy and beauty of which the world is full. It does not require us to shut our eyes to the fact that God's method is one of progress and that the standard by which we judge the beginners in the moral life is very different from that which we apply to those who are further advanced. But it does mean that the standard which we apply must be that of Christ. It means that we shall grieve over the things that grieved him and rejoice over that which gave him joy. It means that that mind shall be in us which was also in Christ Jesus, of whom we read that, "being in the form of God, he counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient

even unto death, yea, the death of the cross."*

Have we the mind of Christ? Is our attitude toward life and its problems his attitude? Does he determine our estimate of values? Do we measure success by the standard by which he measures it—our own success, the success of our children, of our churches, of the community in which we live, of society as a whole? Is love our final test of salvation?

Above all, have we the heart of Christ? Does he set the tone of our feeling? Do we grieve as he grieved over loveless lives? Do we find our greatest happiness in the winning of new recruits to that great purpose of love to which he gave his life? Can we say with truth, as he said, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive"?† If so—and only so—are we ready for the work to which

* Phil. 2 : 7, 8. † Acts 20 : 35.

he has called us as preachers of his salvation.

"I thank thee, Lord, for strength of arm
To earn my bread,
And that beyond my need is meat
For friend unfed.
I thank thee much for bread to live.
I thank thee more for bread to give.

"I thank thee, Lord, for snug thatched roof
In cold and storm,
And that beyond my need is room
For friend forlorn,
I thank thee much for place to rest,
But more for shelter for my guest.

"I thank thee, Lord, for lavish love
On me bestowed,
Enough to share with loveless folk
To ease their load.
Thy love to me I ill could spare,
Yet dearer is the love I share."*

*Davis, "The Better Prayer."

V

THE DEITY OF CHRIST IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN THOUGHT

In the preceding chapters we have considered the Christian answer to the three great questions of religion: the question as to the source of faith, or the seat of authority in religion; the question as to the object of faith, or the nature of God and our relation to him; and the question as to the effect of faith, or the kind of help that we can expect from God in the practical needs of our daily lives. We have asked ourselves what modern theology has to tell us about the Bible, about God, and about salvation. In this study Christ has been our constant companion. We have been looking at

the great realities of religion, as it were, through his eyes. We have been trying to see them as he sees them and to think of them as he would have us think of them, and in doing this we have been studying Christ himself.

But we have been doing so by indirection, as one might study the sun by observing the effects which it produces upon the growing grain, or the light that shines to us out of the eyes of a friend. It is time to make our study more intensive and to ask ourselves who and what is this Christ who has been our companion and what place he is likely to hold in the religion of the future.

We know the place that he has held in the faith of the past. Christ has been the very centre and heart of the Christian religion. No term that language can coin has been too exalted to express the reverence and devotion with which his disciples have regarded him. To them

he has been not merely man, even the best and purest of men, but God himself incarnate for our salvation.

The doctrine which expresses this faith is the deity of Christ. This is the test by which men's Christianity has commonly been judged in the past. What do you think of Christ? Is he your master, your example, your ideal? That is well, but it is not enough. Can you say with Thomas: "My Lord and my God"?* If not, you have no right to a place in the ranks of his disciples.

Is this an attitude which we can still hold to-day? Shall we take over into the new world the old faith in the deity of Christ or is it something that we must leave behind?

At first sight, indeed, it might seem as if it were difficult to take it over. When we contemplate Christ as he is presented to us in the older theology there is

*John 20 : 28.

something about him that seems remote and unfamiliar. He is in our world, yet not of it. Through our human life of sorrow and limitation and sin he moves as a figure from another planet. He wears the face of a man. He speaks to us from human lips. He eats and sleeps and wakes and labours as we do. He weeps when Lazarus dies; he cries out in the garden: "If it be possible, let this cup pass away from me."* But we feel instinctively that these experiences are not like ours. Humanity is only a mask which he wears, a garment that he has put on to cloak the immanent deity. But the divine Christ, who hides behind the human Jesus and to whom alone our worship is due, shares none of these experiences. He does not suffer or pray; he knows no limitations of knowledge or power. Through all the changes of the changing humanity he remains unchanged. The Christ of the old theology

* Matt. 26 : 39.

is not a human individual like you and me; he is the God-man, one person with two natures, one divine and one human, each distinct and separate from the other.

The Jesus who is pictured for us by modern theology is a different figure. He is a human individual, child of his race and of his time, only to be understood in the light of his environment and of the antecedents, physical and spiritual, from which he came. It is not that modern theology makes any less of Christ. On the contrary, we saw that one of its effects has been to emphasise even more strongly than before his central place in Christianity. But it looks at him from a different angle, and this difference may be expressed by saying that, whereas the older theology was content to affirm the humanity of Jesus in general terms, modern theology tries to realise in detail the human individuality of Jesus.

This change is not simply due to the fact that we know more about Jesus than earlier generations knew. That is true, but of itself it would not account for the difference. It is the result of a far-reaching change in our conception of reality. The older theologians thought of reality in abstract terms. Human nature was more real to them than any particular man. When they wished to conceive of God as entering into humanity they thought of him as assuming human nature as a whole. To picture him as incarnate in a single individual passed their imagination. Even as it was, the contrast between Creator and creature was so great that it could never be wholly transcended. In the person of Christ, as elsewhere in the universe, the finite and the infinite might touch but they could not blend. Between God and man there stretched a gulf which even incarnation could not span.

But the world in which we modern men live is the world of the individual and the concrete. We know human nature only as it meets us in particular men. If God is really to enter humanity we must be able to find him in lives like ours, lives that are limited and conditioned, inwardly as well as outwardly, and that appropriate the spiritual realities that transcend time, in forms that are determined by some particular environment. It is not because we would make less of Jesus that we magnify his likeness to ourselves. It is because we feel our need of him so much.

At the heart of the critical research of the last two generations, then, we find not simply an intellectual but a religious motive. Modern theology has been studying the setting of the life of Jesus in detail in order that it might restore his personality to our imagination.

Some years ago I stood on the summit of the hill that rises behind Nazareth. In front rose Mount Tabor, cutting the view into two unequal parts. Behind the hills to the northeast, nestling in its sheltered basin, lay the Sea of Galilee. On the more distant horizon rose the snowy peak of Hermon. To the south opened the fertile plain that stretches without interruption to Jenin, and behind it the hills amid which lies Samaria, and still farther the table-land of Judea, where David built his city on the heights which he had won with the sword. Back of me was Mount Carmel, with its memories of Elijah, and the Mediterranean, where Solomon had sailed his ships. At my feet lay Nazareth, amid its encircling hills, and Mary's Well, where the boy Jesus must often have gone with his mother as she went to fetch the water for her household tasks.

In a well-known passage in his "Histori-

cal Geography of the Holy Land,"* George Adam Smith has used this scene as a framework to make real to us the inner life of Jesus. One by one he pictures the sights that he must have witnessed, as he lived his boy's life from day to day—the caravans wending their slow way from the desert as you can still see them doing to-day; the Roman legions on their way to take ship for home; the pilgrims going up to Jerusalem for the Passover. As you follow the description you forget the flight of time, and it seems as if you were back again in the first century and mingling with the crowds who gathered about the new teacher whose words had so persuasive and winning a charm.

What George Adam Smith does for the boyhood of Jesus, modern theology tries to do for the life of Jesus as a whole. It puts it in its setting as part of a larger environment. We know to-day as we

* Pages 433–435.

have never known before the world in which Jesus lived. We can picture to ourselves the habits and customs of the time, the life of synagogue and temple, the books Jesus must have read, the men and women he must have known, the topics of thought with which he must have been familiar, the conflicting ideals between which he was obliged to choose.

Nor is it only the outward environment that we are able to reproduce, but the inner conditions under which Jesus' life was lived. We understand better than we once did what it means to be a man. Psychology has been studying the inner life and formulating its laws —the law of growth, for example, under which the mind, like the body, appropriates to its use that upon which it feeds; the law of limitation by which we are shut up to choice between alternatives, paying for each new increase of knowl-

edge by some new restriction of attention and deliberate forgetfulness. We know that personality is a social creation, that we think in forms inherited from our ancestors and defined for us by our time, and that we put the treasures of divine truth in the earthen vessel of a limiting environment.

All this reacts upon our view of Jesus. We see him subject to this law, sharing our limitations of knowledge and of power, growing day by day into larger insight, entering into the lives of others by sympathy, made partaker of our infirmities, learning obedience by the things which he suffered.

And as a result of this new realisation there has come to us as never before a consciousness of Christ's brotherhood. I suppose there has never been a time in human history when so many men realised, as realise to-day, that Jesus Christ is their brother, bone of their bone and

flesh of their flesh, very man with all that that implies, and for this we may well thank God.

It would be strange, indeed, if this new emphasis on that which Christ shares with us should not lead some to question whether there is any difference between him and other men. Unitarianism is only the most conspicuous example of a tendency which is wide-spread—the tendency to think of Christ in terms of humanity pure and simple and to regard the historic Christian faith in his deity as a superstition, beautiful if you will, helpful—even indispensable in its day—which we have outgrown.

And yet there is something in each one of us that rebels at so negative a conclusion. When we realise how deeply this faith in the divine Christ has rooted itself in the Christian experience; when we recall how early it began and how long it has persisted; when we try to

measure the devotion and the loyalty it has called forth in generations of Christian believers, from Paul and John in New Testament times down to critical German theologians like Schleiermacher and Ritschl, we feel that it must stand for some truth of vital practical importance which we can ill afford to let go.

Here modern theology comes to our aid, and this in three ways. In the first place, it shows us what Christ's deity has meant to those who have held it in the past. In the second place, it reminds us that the motives which led them to this faith are still operative with us. In the third place, it makes clear the kind of evidence by which the validity of this faith must be tested for the future.

First, of what the doctrine has meant in the past. I have spoken of the contrast between the older conception of Christ's deity and that which we hold

to-day. But it is easy to exaggerate this contrast. The deity of Christ has never been simply an intellectual belief. It is more than a dogma received on authority. It is the confession of faith in a reality with which men have believed themselves to have contact at first hand. They have explained that reality in different ways, but the differences have been differences of interpretation and not of experience. Side by side with the changing opinions about Christ, certain permanent convictions persist which express his practical effect upon human lives, and these practical convictions the doctrine of his deity sums up.

This distinction between the permanent reality which is the object of our faith and our own changing definition of it is familiar enough, and yet it is one which we are constantly tempted to overlook. We confuse our thoughts of things with the things themselves. And

the more important the things are, the more they mean for our practical life, the easier it is to do this. We need constantly to be reminded that theology exists for the sake of religion; that our definitions are designed to make the objects of our faith more real, never to serve as a substitute for them.

The masters of theology have always understood this. They have been interested in theology because they were interested in religion; they were first of all Christians, then theologians, and they were able to think helpfully about religion because they had first experienced the realities of which they talked.

The difficulty began with their successors who no longer shared this intense personal experience, and who tried to live on the experience of the past. These men took over the old definitions and presented them to the new generation as if they were the realities they were

meant to describe. They branded any departure from the old language as heresy, and so promoted that confusion of religion and theology which has done so much harm.

Take that old debate between the Arminians and the Calvinists that has continued through so many centuries without either being able to convince the other. What is the root of the trouble? It is the confusion of reality and theory. We have to do with two great facts, each rooted in experience, both essential to a vital piety—the freedom of man and the sovereignty of God. But the theologians have begun to speculate about these facts and have identified their speculations with the realities they were meant to explain. They have said: No one can believe in freedom who does not hold my theory of the will. No one can hold divine sovereignty who questions my doctrine of the decree.

And the result has been division where there should have been union; suspicion where there should have been sympathy.

The difficulty is aggravated by the fact that we use definitions for different purposes. The interest of the scientist is not the same as that of the man of affairs. Science defines by a process of elimination. It tries to analyse the particular object it studies into its simplest elements and to express these in a logical formula so condensed that it will not need to be revised. But the definitions of practical life need constant revision, for they are descriptions of realities that must be experienced in order to be understood, and experience is always changing.

How shall I define water? Let me ask the chemist and he will tell me that water is H_2O—and by that he means that whenever I put together two parts of hydrogen gas and one of

oxygen I get water. And that is true. But suppose I were trying to describe water to a man who had never seen it; what good would such a definition be?

What is water? Water is something we drink when we are thirsty. It is something we wash with when we need cleansing. It is something that irrigates our fields and that feeds our flowers. It is something that will carry us from Saint Paul to the Gulf and from New York to Liverpool. It is Niagara Falls and the Yosemite. It is the stream that ripples under the alders. It is the deep pool where we caught our first trout.

We must make a similar distinction in our interpretation of Christ. How shall I define Jesus Christ? That depends upon your purpose in asking the question. Are you a theologian with a specialist's technical interest, wishing to know the elements which enter into the

making of our thought of Christ and the proportions in which they are compounded? Then I will answer you in the terms of the Chalcedonian creed. Jesus Christ is very man and very God—two natures in one person, each complete and perfect. You cannot express what he means for your life in any less comprehensive terms. He is not partly man and partly God. He is not sometimes man and sometimes God. He is both God and man everywhere and always. He is God in man reconciling the world unto himself.

But suppose the man who asks the question is one whom I am trying to win to Christian discipleship. What good will it do to quote him the Chalcedonian creed? I do not give the thirsty man the chemist's formula, but a drink of water. So I do not bring the thirsty spirit a formula about Christ, but Christ.

But I must know what Christ can do

for human needs if I am to present him intelligently. I do not offer the thirsty man a bath. So, in presenting Christ as God's answer to man's need, I study the particular need that requires help and show how Christ meets it. And the intelligent and systematic description of the way in which the divine Christ answers human need all along the line is my theology.

What is Jesus Christ? He is the friend who has revealed to me as no one else has ever done my own better nature. He is the helper from whom I have drawn comfort in sorrow and inspiration for duty. He is the leader whom I have promised to follow to the death and in whose service I have found perfect freedom. He is the window through which I have looked into the face of God. This, too, is a definition and in its way as scientific as the other. Only it is a definition that will never be

finished. For it is a definition to which each new generation is adding as it brings its own experience and lays it as a tribute at the feet of Christ.

Let us apply these principles more in detail to the particular aspect of Christ's many-sided personality with which we are here concerned. What does it mean to believe in the deity of Jesus Christ? For the theologian it means that whatever your idea of God may be, that idea in its completeness must enter into your explanation of Jesus Christ. But for the Christian believer it means that you have had certain personal experiences with Christ which irresistibly suggest to your mind the thought of God. It means that Christ has done for you what you are sure that only God can do.

But what does God do for us? What does it mean to believe in him, not as a doctrine of the mind but as a reality personally experienced? It means three

things. It means, in the first place, that we trust him for the supply of all our needs —the need of forgiveness, the need of guidance, the need of comfort, the need of inspiration. It means, in the second place, that we submit our wills to him without reserve as to an authority who has the right to command. It means, finally, that we look up to him in reverence as the being in whom all our ideals are realised and all our aspirations fulfilled. Trust, loyalty, reverence—these are the three notes of religion everywhere and always and these are the three characteristic marks of faith in God.

To believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, then, must mean that in some unmistakable way Christ fulfils these three functions in human life: that we are conscious of dependence on him for the supply of our deepest needs; that we own his right to command; that he is our supreme standard of excellence. And

this is what we find to be the case as a matter of fact.

What does it mean to believe in the deity of Jesus Christ? It means, in the first place, to obey him. It means to make him master of one's own personal life, to judge questions of right and wrong by the standard he has revealed, to measure progress, whether of the individual or of society, according to the extent to which each approaches his ideals and reproduces his character.

Again, to believe in the deity of Jesus Christ means to trust him. It means to put your life and destiny in his keeping, confident that both will be safe. It means to find in him assurance that your sins have been forgiven and ground for hope that they will finally be overcome. It means to see in him the revelation in human form of that unseen power on whom we all depend, who is guiding the world in ways we cannot understand

to the far-off end he has decreed. It means, to be sure, that however for the time he may seem to fail, yet in the end he will have his way.

Above all, to believe in the deity of Jesus Christ means to worship him—not simply to obey him, but to yield him a willing obedience; not merely to trust him, but to rejoice in your trust. It means to see in Jesus Christ the most wonderful and adorable thing in the whole world; to accept his law of love as the divine law; to look up into his face as he hangs on the cross and to have kindled within you a passion for sacrifice that will send you out in self-forgetful service to your brothers and sisters who are in need.

These great experiences of trust, of loyalty, and of reverence find concise expression in the doctrine of Christ's deity. It is the formulation for thought of a reality verifiable in experience—the

experience, namely, of the transforming influence of Christ in human life. To say that I believe in the deity of Jesus Christ means, if the confession be genuine, that I find in him my Master, my Saviour, and my realised ideal.

This practical attitude toward Christ is consistent with a great diversity of theological opinions. There are many questions about him which it leaves unanswered. How shall I conceive the relation between the human Jesus and the unseen God who is manifest in him? How shall I understand the presence in time of the eternal that transcends time? These are questions on which men's minds have been at work for centuries and on which they are still far from agreement. It would be interesting, if there were time, to consider the different answers which have been given and to estimate their value. It would be instructive to point out why the theolo-

gians of the ancient church, trained in the Platonic philosophy, found it most natural to define the relation between humanity and divinity in Christ in the abstract formula of a union of natures; whereas, we of the modern world, with our more vital metaphysics, express the same truth most readily in terms that are concrete and ethical. But we are concerned here not with the speculations on which men differ but with the experiences on which they agree. We wish to know the meaning of Christ's deity for personal religion, and this can be summed up in these three words: power, authority, character.

Thus far we have been concerned with interpretation. What I have just given is not a modern invention—a new theory of Christ's deity to be added to others which have gone before. It is the summary of certain personal experiences which have been called forth in men by

contact with Jesus Christ. Whether we look at the first century, or the fifth, or the sixteenth, or our own, we find that as men have come to know Christ they have begun to trust him, and this trust has borne fruit in loyalty and in reverence; and these experiences of trust, of loyalty, and of reverence have voiced themselves in the historic faith in his deity.

The first contribution of modern theology, then, to our understanding of Christ's deity is a reminder of what this faith has meant to those who have held it in the past. But our interest is not primarily historical. Jesus Christ belongs not simply to the past but to the present. He is a factor in our modern world and we have to decide as to our own personal attitude toward him. Here, too, modern theology has a contribution to make. It shows us that the motives which led the first Christians to their

faith in his deity are still operative with us.

When we inquire as to the motive which first led men to believe in the deity of Jesus Christ we shall find that it was their sense of having found in him a satisfying revelation. And by this I mean a revelation that should be at once definite and permanent, able to meet the present need of guidance and assurance, and at the same time to hold its own through the changes of the passing generations.

This need of a definite revelation recurs again and again in human experience. However exalted may have been men's thought of God, however much they may have emphasised the contrast between him and themselves, they have never been satisfied with a religion that left him permanently at a distance. They have wanted God to enter into their own personal experience and evidence his presence there in ways that

were unmistakable. The history of religion is the story of man's search for God and of the ways in which they have believed that God has answered their quest. Sometimes in strange natural phenomena—the earthquake, the lightning, the fire, the pestilence; sometimes through the word of prophet, or lawgiver, or seer, and again in the silence of his own spirit, man has heard God speaking to his soul and been satisfied.

This need for a self-revealing God is not simply intellectual. It springs from man's consciousness of his own limitations and failures. It is not merely that he is curious to know what God is like. He wishes to know what is God's disposition toward him as a helper in the personal problems of which his life is full. He needs comfort in his sorrows, forgiveness for his sins, guidance in his perplexities, an answer to his unanswered questions. Above all, he needs enfranchise-

ment, the personal renewal in which the bondage of habit is broken and the spirit made free for the larger life of service. And the greater his practical need, the more numerous and the more distressing the disabilities under which he labours, the more hopeless his situation, measured in terms of human strength and wisdom alone, the more acute his longing for some clear word from God on which he can rely. To appreciate Paul's answer to the Philippian jailor, you must first understand the question that prompted it: "What must I do to be saved?" *

If we analyse the ways in which men have thought of God as answering this need for definite self-revelation we find that they fall into two groups. They have thought of God as speaking to them from without, in signs and wonders that evidence his power; and they have

* Acts 16 : 30.

thought of him as speaking to them within, through some redemptive experience that reveals his love. The contrast runs through the whole history of religion. It meets us in the New Testament, in the demand of the Pharisees for a sign, and Jesus' refusal to give any sign but preaching like that of Jonah, at which the men of Nineveh repented.* It persists down to our own day in the contrast between the apologetic which rests its case upon miracle and that which finds its convincing proof in the evidence of Christian experience. It goes back at last to the conception of God, whether we make power or character determinative for our thought of deity.

One need not undervalue God's power to feel that the second method of approach is more truly Christian. Almighty though he be, the Father whom Jesus revealed cannot be described in

* Matt. 12 : 41; *cf.* Matt. 16 : 1–4; Luke 11 : 29, 30.

terms of power alone. He is wisdom and righteousness and love, and, if he is to enter human life at all, can do so completely only in terms of the perfect character. The revelation that is adequately to express him must present him as the just judge, knowing the heart of man and understanding the motives by which it is swayed; as the loving father sympathising with his child in his sorrows and temptations and believing in his ultimate home-coming in spite of waywardness and sin; as the good shepherd giving his life for the sheep. Could we find a man who realised this ideal of character, a man so pure as to convict us of sin, so understanding as to reveal to us our own better nature, so self-sacrificing as to give his life that others might live, we should have the conditions under which, and under which alone, God could adequately reveal himself to man.

Such a man the disciples found in

Jesus. In him they saw one who expressed in human form their highest ideal of God, a man so pure that when they touched him they were conscious as never before of their sin, yet at the same time so full of faith as to inspire in them the hope that they, too, might some day become like him. In Jesus they found the complete answer to all their needs, understanding, sympathy, forgiveness, inspiration, power. He was to them God's clear and final word to man.

We, too, share their need of some clear word from God. And for us, too, Jesus provides the answer to this need. Less introspective than our fathers, more concerned with the problems of social than of individual sin, we find in Jesus our leader in the struggle for social righteousness, the prophet of spiritual democracy, the preacher and founder of the kingdom of God. But for us, too, as for earlier generations, his personality re-

tains its perennial freshness. For us, as for them, he is Saviour as well as leader, the one in whom we find the answer to our individual as well as our social need. If we are to define God in terms of a single character it is to Jesus that we must turn.

This appeal is independent of the fluctuations of critical opinion. However the critics may reconstruct the story that lies back of the Gospels, they cannot alter the picture the Gospels present. Here, in the pages of the evangelists, we meet a figure so individual and distinctive that after all the lapse of centuries he still speaks to us with a spiritual authority as direct and compelling as that which won him his first disciples by the lake shore. For us, as for them, he expresses in terms of a human life our highest thought of God.

But we may be asked: Why confine God's revelation to a single individual?

Why should not God express himself through many men? Why may not humanity as a whole be his progressive self-manifestation?

It might be sufficient to say that humanity as a whole is not such as to suggest to most men the thought of God. Men as we know them to-day are sinful and unlovely, still under the dominion of the selfishness and passions from which Christ came to set them free. Even the best of men are imperfect, differing not only in their ideals but in the extent to which they have realised them. It is just because we meet such diversity of belief and of character that our need for a definite and authoritative revelation is so great.

But such an answer does not quite meet the point of the question. Those who ask it are not thinking of man as he is but as he is to be when God shall have completed his redemptive work.

And they wish to know how that consummation can most speedily be reached. Why should God deal with us indirectly by pointing us to a figure in the past? Why should he not impart himself directly to each individual? When all are his children, why separate one from the rest as "the Son"?

It is the spirit of democracy which voices itself in the question. One of the notes of our day is a new consciousness of the worth and of the possibilities of the individual. Men are no longer willing to take things on authority. It is not enough for them to know that it has been so in the past. They wish to test things for themselves and live their own lives in the freedom of independent personalities. If they are to have a government, it must be one of their own choosing. If they are to have a God, it must be one whom they have tried for themselves and found satisfying.

And there is much that is splendid in this spirit. It is responsible for many reforms in church and state. It is our hope of progress in the future. Without independent personalities, conscious of their own worth and willing to take the risks of liberty, you cannot have either a free state or a free church.

But, after all, this is only one side of democracy. The democratic spirit is a spirit of freedom but it is a brotherly spirit as well. And brotherhood requires self-discipline. It means the willingness to learn as well as to teach, to serve as well as to rule. Democracy is not the dissolution of society into the individual units that compose it. That would be anarchy. Democracy is the extension to humanity as a whole of those ideals of beauty and goodness and truth which have hitherto been the prerogative of the select few.

There is a peril here against which

we need to be on our guard. I have spoken more than once of the disintegrating tendencies that are abroad, the loss of efficiency which comes with the breaking down of standards. The tendency is natural, inevitable, perhaps, but none the less dangerous. If we are to realise the ideal of brotherhood there must be some counteracting influence, some common test, to which we can all refer, some principle of integration strong enough to resist the divisive tendencies of individualism.

All the more, then, if we share the democratic ideal do we need Jesus. We need him to define for us the kind of life which we desire all men to share. We need him to reveal to us the kind of God with whom each one of us may have direct personal communion if we will. We need him to inspire us to common service and to form a bond of union between men who but for him would be separated from one another.

It is a great mistake to think of the doctrine of Christ's deity as designed to separate him from other men. That has never been its purpose. It was designed to bring him near to men, to show us what blessings in his person God designs to impart to us all. If men pictured Christ in abstract terms, one person with two natures, it was because they thought of God and man in abstract ways, not because they designed to keep them apart. To the mind, indeed, incarnation might involve a contradiction, but to the heart it was the expression of the fundamental experience of all religion, God's presence with men in redemptive and triumphant love. "Jesus Christ . . . became what we are," wrote Irenæus, "that he might make us what he is." *

This is the meaning of that old truth of the Messiahship of Jesus which holds so large a place in the New Testament. It is the assertion of the continuity of

* "Adv. Haer.," bk. V, preface.

the divine revelation. To call Jesus Messiah is to assign to him a place in the larger drama of history. He is not an isolated figure who comes to us out of the clouds without relation to the past or to the future. He is the centre of a progressive revelation which began with the dawn of human history and will not be complete till all mankind own his sway and conform to his ideals. He is the expression in individual form and under particular historic conditions of what God purposes for humanity everywhere and always.

We, too, share the need of an interpretation of history. Looked at from the surface, our life is like the sea, which is always in motion. Creed follows creed, and leader replaces leader in ceaseless succession. Yet underneath the great tides of faith and hope and love sweep their resistless way to their appointed goal. Whither are they moving? Who

will interpret for us the trend of the ages? In contrast to the ideals of race and nation and school, who will embody for us the ideal of humanity as such? Who if not Jesus, who knew what was in man and who for that reason speaks always to that which is eternal in man?

There have been critics who have found fault with Jesus because of his aloofness from the special tasks of calling or class. What interest, they have asked, did he ever show in science or art or politics? What great book did he write? What picture did he paint? What discovery did he make? What lasting reform is labelled with his name?

Is there, then, no task for humanity more important than writing books, or painting pictures, or enacting laws? Is there no common ground on which artist and scientist and statesman can meet and find themselves at one? If not, all our talk of brotherhood is empty words.

But if there is such a common ground, if to be man is more than to follow any of the special callings which engage the energy and divide the interest of individual men, then we need some one to incarnate this common human ideal and to remind us when we are tempted to forget them of those universal aspirations which belong to man as man. This unifying function Jesus fulfils in supreme degree. Just because of his aloofness from that which is local and divisive he is fitted to be the representative of humanity as a whole.

We are dealing not with theory but with experience. I have spoken of Jesus as a Jew of the first century, and it is true that he is this. But he is far more than this. He is the central figure of human history, numbering among his disciples men of every age and of every land, the common meeting-ground of civilisations and of races. Here is a

fact which needs explanation. And what better explanation can be found than that which was given centuries ago by Paul, that God was in him reconciling the world unto himself?

We have considered the meaning of Christ's deity for the past. We have seen that the motives which led the first disciples to their faith are still operative with us. It remains to ask briefly what is the kind of evidence by which its validity must finally be tested.

At no point is the contrast between the older and the newer method in theology more apparent. The older apologists attempted a proof of Christ's deity which should have the force of a mathematical demonstration. They approached the problem as a problem of logic in which the important thing was to put your argument in such a form that the conclusion followed irresistibly from the premises. God is a being who possesses

certain known qualities. Jesus Christ possesses these qualities; therefore Christ is God. In some such fashion the apologist constructed his syllogism. When the syllogism was complete his work was done. Henceforth the responsibility rested on those who refused to act upon the conclusion which he had established.

But we see to-day that the matter is not so simple. The proof of Christ's deity can never be independent of the personal religious experience, because in the nature of the case the argument involves the appeal to a continuing experience. For what is it that we wish to prove? Not simply that centuries ago God was incarnate in Christ (that might conceivably be established by purely historical arguments), but that Christ, in what we know of him to-day, represents what God is everywhere and always, and therefore remains for ever the revelation of God. This is a far more impor-

tant and more difficult matter. To do this we must be able to show that the Spirit of Christ is still the world-conquering spirit. This involves an appeal to present experience as well as to the experience of the past. To believe in Christ's deity means, as we have seen, to trust his power, to own his authority, and to reverence his character. But I cannot do this in any true sense until I have tested Christ in my own life and found him trustworthy, righteous, and adorable. There is no argument which can take the place of experiment. The most that one man can do for another is to tell him of his own experience and point him to Christ, that he may test the matter for himself.

This does not mean that we have not sufficient evidence for our faith. If what I have said is true of the transforming power of Christ in human life we have evidence of the highest value, amply suf-

ficient to justify our confidence and form the basis of our appeal. *But it means that the appeal must be made.* My experience cannot take the place of my neighbour's. If he is really to share my faith in the divine Christ he must put Christ to the proof in his own life.

This is the uniform assumption of the writers of the New Testament. To prove Christ's deity as Paul and John believed in it, it was not enough to establish the fact that for a few short years God had made his home in a human life. From the very beginning he had planned to make men like Christ, and the life that was led in Palestine was only an episode in a continuing ministry. Before the incarnation, the Word had been lighting every man that came into the world.* And after the resurrection the living Christ continued to draw all men to himself by his Spirit.

*John 1 : 9.

The same large conception of Christ's work lives on in the later theology. It lies at the heart of the doctrine of the Trinity. God is not simply the Father, infinite and eternal, ever contrasted with his creatures in majesty and power. He is not simply the Son who lived and suffered and died, the Word made flesh, incarnate in Jesus for our salvation. He is the Spirit who ever lives and works in the hearts of men, witnessing to them of Christ, their Saviour, and transforming them as they will receive him into likeness to himself.

What kind of proof, then, must it be which shall convince all men of the deity of Jesus Christ? Clearly it can only be an all-embracing Christian experience. When Christ has really shown himself Master of the world, when his ideals have proved themselves the conquering ideals, when humanity as a whole has owned his sway and is conformed to his

character, when all men see God in him with the same clearness and certainty as is now the case with those who are consciously his disciples, then, and not till then, will our proof of his deity be finished and the apologist's work be done.

If, then, we would win men to our faith in the deity of Christ, our faces must be turned not to the past but to the future. You remember how it was with the disciples in those memorable hours which followed the crucifixion. Their thoughts were on the past, on those unforgettable days by the lake shore, when they had walked and talked with the Master, who spake as never man spake. They were no less loyal to Christ than they had ever been. But their loyalty was a sorrowful loyalty, for they never expected to see their Master's face again. Their Christ was a Christ of the past. They worshipped a Saviour whose work was finished.

And then came Easter morning, and they realised that the Christ they had thought dead was alive. What a transformation it wrought in their whole outlook on life! Instead of looking backward they now looked forward to the new triumphs still to be won as they went out to preach Jesus, the crucified, whom God had raised up and whose power and authority all the world would some day recognise.

The church, too, like those early disciples, has often turned its face to the past. It has been tempted to think of God's work as finished in what Jesus did nineteen hundred years ago in Palestine. In its adoration of the crucified Jesus it has sometimes forgotten the living and reigning Christ.

But, thank God, we are finding out our mistake. God's revelation did not stop with Calvary. It includes Easter and all that followed it. In our mod-

ern world of aspiration and struggle and longing, with its unanswered questions and its challenging opportunities, he is still at work revealing and redeeming. He is calling us by his Spirit to be his interpreters to the new age, preparing the way for that better day when all men shall share our faith in the divine Christ because all shall share our experience of his transforming and enfranchising power.

VI

THE CHURCH: ITS PRESENT OPPORTUNITY AND DUTY

In the last chapter we considered the contribution of modern theology to our understanding of Christ's deity. We saw that this doctrine has social as well as individual significance. In Jesus God has shown us not only what he himself is like but the type of character which he desires to see realised in every one of us. Here is a faith which is at the same time an ideal and a challenge. How is this challenge to be met?

This brings me to the final topic in the present series—the church, its opportunity and its duty. It is the point at which we have been aiming all along.

Let me recall the ground we have traversed.

We began by considering what theology can do for the preacher, and we saw that it can do two things: it can give him a general point of view and it can help him in the particular problems with which he has to deal.

I called attention, in the first place, to certain general conclusions of modern theology which are helpful to the preacher. We saw that religion is a fundamental fact in human life with which every man must reckon whether he will or no. We saw, further, that religions differ in kind and that difference in kind means difference in value. We saw that if there is to be a universal religion it must be Christianity, since Christianity alone is able to satisfy the permanent religious needs of mankind. We saw, finally, that Christ is central in Christianity. He is its distinctive con-

tribution to the life of mankind and the standard by which all religious progress must be tested.

We went on to apply these general conclusions to the chief problems of practical religion—the problem of the source of faith, the problem of the object of faith, and the problem of the effect of faith upon daily living. We asked what modern theology has to tell us about the Bible, about God, and about salvation, and we saw that it is its effort to interpret each of these central facts of the religious life in the light of the distinctive conviction of historic Christianity, the deity of Jesus Christ. It remains to ask how the results which we have reached are to be made effective. How are we to bring the convictions we have gained to bear practically upon human life?

We must do it by organisation. Every great cause which has commanded the

allegiance of men has embodied itself in institutions. We, too, must have some means of social propaganda by which we can touch men all along the line and win them to our cause. Such a means is the Christian church. The church is the religious society which has come into existence for the very purpose of interpreting Christ's spirit and perpetuating his work. To the church is committed that practical demonstration of his deity which consists in the victory of his principles in the world.

What, then, do we mean by the church of Christ and what exactly is its function in society?

It is high time that we asked ourselves this question. One must be blind to the signs of the times not to recognise that there are important sections of the population upon which the hold of the church has weakened. I do not mean to imply by this that the church is on

the down grade or that its influence is decreasing. We are often told this, but I do not believe that it is true. On the contrary, I am confident that the church is improving and that its efficiency is growing. I do not believe there has ever been a time in human history when, taken in the large, the influence of the church was more wholesome and more beneficent. But this is quite consistent with the fact that its progress is not as rapid as we should like or its influence as extensive. There are many excellent people who hold aloof from the church. It is not that they are irreligious or lack ideals but that their moral and spiritual life has found other outlets. They are interested in settlements or in civic work, or in organised philanthropy in some one of its many forms. For their preaching they go to the poets or the philosophers. They do not seem to feel their need of the church or to realise their

obligation to it. And yet they are people on whose sympathy and support we ought to be able to count.

When we trace this alienation to its roots we shall find that it is due not simply to dissatisfaction with the practical work of the church, but to the lack of a clear understanding of its function in society—in other words, to the lack of a definite ideal.

This is especially true of those who have been brought up under Protestant influences. Standing as we do in a peculiar sense for religious freedom, we have been from the first suspicious of organised Christianity. The church as an institution is not made so prominent with us as with some other bodies of Christians, and it is not strange, therefore, that many of our members should be at sea as to its real function.

But such an attitude is very short-sighted. Institutional Christianity is not

a fact from which we can escape even if we wished to do so. It meets us on every side and enters into our most familiar experiences. From childhood to old age the church is our constant companion. It teaches our children; it marries and buries us; it provides the forms through which our spiritual aspiration finds natural expression. If its influence is evil it is an evil of colossal proportions. If its effects are negligible it represents a waste of energy so stupendous as to be appalling. If it is an instrument of good it is one so far-reaching that it is folly not to use it to the full. All the more if we are Protestants, believing in freedom of opinion and individual responsibility, do we need to have clear-cut views as to the nature and function of the church.

Fundamental to clear thinking is the distinction between the church as a religious society and the church as an ec-

clesiastical institution. The former is the company of Christian people. It includes all who have been touched by the Spirit of Christ and live to promote his cause in the world. The latter is the organisation which has grown up in the course of history, with its complex machinery of creed and ritual, order and discipline. The New Testament commonly uses the word church in the first of these senses. We to-day commonly use it in the second. Failure to distinguish between these two uses is responsible for not a little of the existing confusion.

There are two points as to which current thought about the church needs to be clarified. The first has to do with the relation of the church as a company of believers to the church as an ecclesiastical organisation; the second has to do with the function of the organisation.

All bodies of Christians agree that

there is a difference between the ecclesiastical institution we call the church and the company of persons whose spiritual life it is designed to express and to promote. They divide in their estimate of the relative importance of the two. According to one view the continuity of the church's life depends primarily upon the institution. It is the church as an institution which God has appointed to be the vicar of Christ and to which he has intrusted the deposit of truth and grace which he has provided for the guidance and salvation of mankind. According to the other view the continuity of the church's life depends primarily upon the persons who compose it. The true apostolic succession is the succession of consecrated lives, and the institution we call the church is an instrument which the Christian people have created under the guidance of God's Spirit to assist them in their work of propaganda and of ministry.

It is true that the implications of the two principles are not always consistently drawn. While the first represents what we commonly call the Catholic and the second the Protestant view of the church, the contrast is by no means confined to the members of the ecclesiastical bodies which bear these names. There are Catholics, like the Modernists, whose view of the church approximates that of Protestantism. There are Protestants who in their conception of the church are essentially Catholic, and there are many, both Catholic and Protestant, who have never thought the question through at all. Life does not develop along lines of logic, and the history of churches, as of individuals, is the story of compromise, sometimes deliberate, more often unconscious.

Nevertheless, the contrast persists and with the growth of knowledge is bound to come to clearer and clearer conscious-

ness. Whatever may be our practical attitude in view of the particular ecclesiastical situation, in ideal we must be Catholic or Protestant, and the choice of ideal will, in the long run, determine our practical activity. It is important, therefore, that we who call ourselves Protestants should realise clearly just what the choice involves.

First, then, let me say that it does not involve the perpetuation of the sectarian spirit which in the past has often been associated with the name. One may freely admit that in the particular questions which have been in debate between Catholics and Protestants the right has not always been on the same side. One may recognise that Catholicism, with its reverence for authority and its strong sense of social solidarity, has emphasised a side of religion over which Protestants have been tempted to pass too lightly. Christianity is larger than

any one of its existing forms, and we may be sure that the religion of the future, if it is to be truly Christian, will make place for all the truth for which Catholicism stands and provide for all the needs which now find their satisfaction in institutional Christianity.

But of this, too, we may be sure, that if the Christianity of the future is to be truly Christian it will apply to its conception of the church the same principles which determine its thought of God and of salvation. It will not tolerate any substitute for that free intercourse between the Father and his child which is the normal relationship between those who are spiritually akin. It will accept with thankfulness all the heritage which has come down to us from the past, of creed and sacrament and ritual and institution, but it will use these as means and not as end. It will never forget that the true church of Christ is the

whole company of Christian people in all the manifold forms of their activity, and that what we call the church to-day is only one form, although a most important form, of this many-sided activity.

And this brings me to the second of our two questions—that which has to do with the specific function of the church as an institution. Here, too, we find two views. According to the first of these the church is the all-embracing Christian institution, the agency through which the Christian people ought to express their Christianity all along the line. According to the second, it is one among other agencies which they use for this purpose. It is the Christian people organised for religion, that is to say, for worship, for religious instruction, and for inspiration.

I believe that the second view is the truer. The church as an institution is a specialised form of Christian activity.

It exists to remind men of God and to help them to realise his presence as the supreme reality.

At first sight it might seem as if this were to assign the church a very narrow function. But when we remember what kind of being God is we see our mistake. The God we worship is the Lord of the whole earth. He is not our Father only but the Father of all men. His social purpose embraces every human being, and he has taught us through Christ that the worship he requires is service.

It does not follow, however, that this service must find its sole expression through a single channel. Society includes many different institutions—the home, the school, the workshop, and the state. These, too, as well as the church, may become organs of Christ, agencies through which his Spirit may find expression. It is a good thing to open a day nursery for neglected children but

a better thing to make such homes that children will not be neglected. It is a good thing to open a hospital for tubercular patients but a better thing to have such a healthful city that we shall have no tuberculosis. Our business as Christians is to Christianise society as a whole. When all our institutions, I repeat, do their work so well that the church does not need to supplement them, then, and not till then, shall we have succeeded in our aim.

This does not mean that the church should never do anything but preach religion. As a matter of fact, it does much more. It has social functions. It is the gathering place of the community, the one spot in which men of all ranks and social position meet together on an equality. It has philanthropic functions: it dispenses charity to those who are in need, visits the sick, feeds the hungry, ministers to the prisoners. It has ethical

functions: it stands for righteousness in the community and through its clubs and organisations often takes an active part in movements for civic betterment and reform. There are, indeed, some communities in which the church is the one comprehensive institution about which centre all the activities of the Christian people. What is sometimes called the institutional church is concerned with education and with amusement, with political activity and with economic betterment as well as with religion. It has its libraries and its club-rooms, its mothers' meetings and its kindergartens, its gymnasiums and its employment bureaus, and so on through all the manifold list of interests which have been developed by our complex social life. It is entirely natural and proper that this should be so. It is always wasteful to duplicate machinery, and when there is no other organisation in existence of

which it is possible to make use it is legitimate and, indeed, necessary for the Christian church to step in and do the work that needs to be done.

But we are talking of ideals and here there is need of clear thinking if we are not to go astray. Our contention is that however useful and necessary these other functions of the church may be they are incidental to its true work, which is religion. The primary object of the church, we maintain, is to keep alive in the world the consciousness of God as the supreme fact of human life. If we fail here no lesser success will atone for our failure.

Are we, then, to suppose that when the kingdom of God comes there will be no more need of the church? Let me answer this question by another. Are we to suppose that when the kingdom of God comes we shall no longer realise our relation to God as the supreme fact

of human life, that we shall no longer desire to express our communion with him in prayer and praise, that we shall no longer wish to tell others what he means to us and to hear what he means to them, that we shall no longer turn to him for inspiration for service and guidance in duty? So long as we do these things we may be sure that we shall still have a church, for it is to meet these needs that the church exists.

When, therefore, I propose for our consideration "The Opportunity and Duty of the Church" I use the word church in the familiar sense in which we all use it. I am thinking of the institution of which we are members, the institution of which the historic churches are part, the Christian people organised for religion. And we wish to know of this church two things: first, What is its opportunity? and, second, What is its duty?

I can answer this double question in

as many sentences. The opportunity of the church is to become the leader to which all earnest men will turn for guidance and inspiration in the moral and spiritual revival which is going on all about us. The duty of the church—and that means of all of us who belong to it—is to use this opportunity to the full.

Let me explain more fully what I mean. And first of the opportunity.

I say the opportunity of the church is to become the leader to which all earnest men will turn for guidance and inspiration in the moral and religious revival which is in progress all about us.

I assume that there is such a moral and religious revival. I will not stop to prove this. In the new standard of business morality, in the new ideals of civic responsibility, in the growing humanitarianism which shows itself in the movement for social betterment in all its manifold forms, we are aware of a new

spirit which we cannot ignore. Even those who are not in sympathy with it are influenced by it. Men find they cannot do with impunity what they used to do without question a dozen years ago.

Now, the notable fact about this great moral revival is that it has been to a very considerable extent independent of the church as an organisation. Individual ministers here and there have taken part in it. Individual church members have made notable contributions to it. But the church as a whole, the church as an organised body, has too often held aloof from it. It has not been the acknowledged leader to which those who are interested in social reform have turned.

I do not believe that this is as it should be. I believe that the leaders of the church ought to be leaders in every movement for moral and social uplift and that they are qualified to become

such, and I wish now to give the reasons for my faith. They are three:

In the first place, the church has access to the largest number of people who are open to moral influence. In the second place, it has command of the ultimate religious motive. And, in the third place, it is of all institutions the most free from conflicting interests.

In the first place, the church has a responsibility for leadership in this movement because it has access to the largest number of people who are open to moral influence.

I am anxious here not to be misunderstood. I am far from assuming that the church has any monopoly of virtue or unselfishness. One must be blind, indeed, not to recognise how large a contribution is being made to social progress to-day by men and women who are outside the church. But what I mean is this, that if we take things in the large

it will be found that the Christian church includes in its membership a greater number of men and women who feel their moral responsibility for others' welfare and who are open to moral appeal than any other single organisation or, indeed, than all other organisations together. If you do not believe this, read such a paper as the *Survey*, the organ of the charitable interests of this country, and see how large a place the religious motive plays in the lives of the men and women who write for it. Study the list of contributors to any of the great societies that have to do with organised charity; go out yourself and try to raise money for any good cause and see how much you can get from men and women who have no connection with the church, and you will realise that, however imperfect Christians may be and however far they fall below the standard which their religion sets, they are still more

open to the appeal of social need and social responsibility than any other equally large group of people. Here is a great force waiting to be utilised for good, and it is our business as Christian ministers to see that this is done.

But, in the second place, the church ought to assume leadership because it has command of the ultimate religious motive. That motive is God's love for man and the corresponding love of man for man which it calls forth.

We stand to-day, with reference to this matter of moral and social reform, in a very different position from the generations who have preceded us. We know (or, at least, we are in a fair way to know if we will) what we ought to do to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

I have spoken in earlier chapters of the contribution which modern science has made to the study of theology, but the contribution of science to philanthropy

is even more notable. We have been studying these social evils which are all about us, and we have found that many of them are not irremediable. Take, for example, such a matter as tuberculosis, which is so prominently before the public to-day. We know that this is a preventable disease. If we do what we ought we can stamp it out as completely as we have stamped out cholera and smallpox. Take the matter of prison reform. Take the matter of juvenile delinquency. Take even the great question of poverty itself. Vast as these problems are, stupendous as is the impression which they make upon the imagination, we know that they are not insoluble. If each one of us would do what he ought to do we could transform society and bring in the kingdom of God.

But the trouble is that so many people do not want to do it. We see what ought to be done, but we are not will-

ing to make the sacrifice. Often it does not seem to us worth while. At a recent meeting of the National Conference of Charities,* the president, Homer Folks, passed in review the progress for the last few years in social and charitable reform. He pointed out how slow this progress had been and how often the bright hopes with which a new movement had been begun had suffered shipwreck, and he traced the cause of this failure back to the place where all the most serious failures of life belong—to the lack of adequate motive. Men were not willing to exert themselves or to make the sacrifice that was required.

Here is the great opportunity of the Christian church, for in the gospel of the God of love we command the supreme motive and can supply the power which science alone can never furnish. When I realise that the poor fellow who

* *Cf.* "Survey," vol. xxvi, pp. 526–531.

is dying of consumption in the back room of some dark tenement is my brother, that the young girl who has gone on the street to earn her living because some man deceived her is my sister; when we all realise our personal relationship to the men and women who are the victims of social injustice and economic wrong we shall set about righting their wrongs with a vigour and enthusiasm which in the long run will be bound to tell. Who is to do it if we do not? Who is in so good a position to do it if they would?

And this brings me to the third of the three advantages which fit the church for leadership. I mean its freedom from conflicting interests. There is no institution which is so well fitted as the Christian church to take the lead in the betterment of society, because there is no other institution which exists exclusively for the promotion of Christlikeness.

Here again I am anxious not to be

misunderstood. I realise as well as any one the imperfection of the church. Organisation in any form has its difficulties and its dangers. The mere work of running the machine absorbs so much of our energy that the strength and time that ought to go to higher and more important things are wasted. That which was meant to be a means tends to become an end, and before we know it the institution which should be our servant has become our master.

But while this is true of the church, as of every other institution, it is less true of the church than of other institutions, for the simple reason that by its very constitution the church is brought continually face to face with the moral and religious ideals of Jesus Christ. Other institutions may make splendid contributions to the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, and, thank God, they are making them. But, after all, they are

incidental to the main purpose for which they exist. The newspaper must make money for its stockholders, and the editor is only in part free. The teacher has the whole field of human knowledge to cultivate, and what he has to contribute of moral and religious inspiration is by the way. But the Christian minister exists for the single purpose of making real to men the purpose of God for the salvation of the world. There is no other task which is laid upon him and no other obligation to which he is committed than this, and if he fail here his failure is of all failures the most inexcusable.

This brings me to my second and last proposition, that it is the duty of the church—and that means of us who are its members—to use this great opportunity to the full.

You will notice that I have put this statement in a personal form. When we are talking of opportunity we can speak

in the abstract, but duty is always an individual matter. It comes home to the conscience of some specific man or woman. The duty of the church means your duty and mine.

Let us analyse this duty more in detail and see what it is like. As I see it, it has two phases. It is, in the first place, a duty of vision and, in the second place, a duty of action. There is something for us to see and something for us to do.

First of all, there is something for us to see. I put this first because it is most important. Our first business as ministers is to have an ideal. If we do not know what we want to do it will be hopeless for us to try to do it.

When I was coming over the Canadian Pacific recently I passed through the wonderful horseshoe tunnels just beyond Mount Stephen. The railroad turns into the mountain and there curves completely

around, descending all the time until it emerges far below the place where it entered. Crossing the valley to the other side, it repeats the same operation and thus transforms a grade which had been so heavy that it required four engines to move a train in safety into one which is practicable with a single engine.

These tunnels are one of the great engineering feats of the continent, and I was interested to know how they were built. It seems that the engineer had planned his route so carefully that two sets of workmen beginning at opposite ends of the tunnel had met in the centre scarcely an inch apart. "And the interesting thing about it," said my informant, "is the fact that the engineer made the plans of the tunnel while he was still on the plains."

But who set the engineer to work? Who took him from his office in the city and brought him to the mountains and

said: "Here is your problem; solve it"? That was a man of a different type—the idealist who first saw Vancouver and Montreal as parts of a single railway system and refused to believe in the existence of any obstacle strong enough to keep them permanently apart.

In our work of social reconstruction we need engineers to plan in detail the lines along which the train of progress is to move. And it is impossible to value their work too highly. But engineers alone, however complete their mastery of social mechanics, will never bring in the kingdom of God. There must be some one first to see where the train needs to go and to inspire others with his faith that the desired goal can be reached. That is the office of the minister of religion. He may not know in detail how the obstacles are to be overcome that keep us from the promised land, but he must know where the land

lies and what it has to offer. He is the prospector who points the way for those who are to follow, and his first duty is to see straight.

But it is not enough to see. We must act upon what we see. And this brings me to the second of our duties as ministers, which is application. As Christians we are responsible for making the church the most effective instrument possible for accomplishing the great work which is given it to do. There is material here for a book in itself. Let me, in closing, simply touch on two or three points which lie on the surface.

We saw that the church as a religious institution exists for three purposes: worship, religious instruction, and inspiration. How far is it realising its ideal in this threefold respect?

Take worship. If what we have been saying is true, this is the supreme function of the Christian church. The church

exists to make God real to the consciousness of man. And when I say God I mean the Christian God, the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If Christianity is true, then God is not only the most real but the most glorious and significant of facts, and the purpose of our gathering in church Sunday by Sunday is that we may realise afresh the infinite resources of inspiration and strength which this great fact puts at our command and go out solemnised, comforted, but, above all, consecrated to the work to which we were called through Christ.

But if this is our purpose in going to church, everything that we do in church ought to contribute to this purpose. From the opening prelude to the benediction, every word that is spoken and every note that is sung ought to play its part in deepening our consciousness of God. Nothing ought to be permitted in the service that is merely formal or

conventional, nothing that is shallow or insincere, nothing that is a hindrance rather than a help to faith.

And yet, how hard it is to realise this ideal in practice! How much that we do in church is haphazard and unrelated! How easy it is for the minister to concentrate his attention upon the sermon and let the earlier parts of the service degenerate into a mere routine! How easy to be content with the forms that have come down to us from the past in hymn and liturgy and prayer without making our own the living faith of which they were the expression and which must vitalise every new use we make of them if they are really to result in a more vivid consciousness of God! Above all, how few of us feel our responsibility for the creation of those new forms of worship which shall express in dignified and fitting language the discovery of God's power and activity in the social move-

ments of our time which is so characteristic a feature of present-day Christianity! More than by its sermons, an age is known by its hymns and by its prayers. It is an encouraging sign of the times that the new forms are beginning to appear. May we not hope that such prayers as Professor Rauschenbusch's "Prayers of the Social Awakening," * and such hymns as have recently been gathered by Mrs. Mussey in the *Survey*,† are prophetic of many more to follow—prayers and hymns no less conscious of God's presence and glory than the greatest of the hymns of the past, but differing from them in the fact that they find God at work here and now and revive the old prophetic hope, too long forgotten, of a day when God's will shall be done on earth?

Or take the second of the three functions I have referred to—religious teach-

* Pilgrim Press, Chicago, 1909. † January 3, 1914.

ing. How far is the church realising the ideal here? Protestantism, as we all know, has always emphasised the teaching function of the minister. It stands for a faith that is intelligent and robust and believes that such faith is the birthright of every Christian believer.

Yet, as one who has been for many years a teacher, dealing with young men coming from all over the country, nothing has impressed me more than the lack of thorough grounding in the essentials of Christianity. Men come to the seminary who have been brought up in Christian homes, who have studied in Christian colleges, who have been members of the Christian church all their lives, and yet who know little of the Bible, who are ignorant of the history of Christianity and of the government of the church and, above all, who know nothing of theology.

There are many reasons for this. In

part it is due to the change in our habits of life which has altered the relation between home and church and school. In part it is the result of the change in educational method which has substituted freedom of choice for the older disciplinary curriculum. Above all, it is due to the change in the angle of vision to which reference was made in the opening chapter, the loss of the old view-point before the new has come to take its place. But, whatever the cause, the fact remains that there are multitudes of people in our churches who cannot give an intelligent reason for their faith—indeed, who have never given serious thought to the ultimate questions with which faith is concerned.

Here is our opportunity as Christian ministers. It is with the ultimate realities that we have to do. It is our business to teach men what they most need to know about God and the soul, sin and

salvation, duty and destiny—the great questions which sleep in the soul of man until some crisis calls them to the light.

But to do this effectively we must do it deliberately and intelligently. We cannot be content with an occasional sermon. We must make our entire ministry one of teaching, and that means we must begin by teaching ourselves. We must live day by day with the great themes. We must know what is being written about them by the great thinkers; we must test what we have read and thought by the life problems of the men and women we touch, and we must pass on what we have so learned and tested to all whom we can reach. How this is to be done in detail I cannot say. It is a complex problem varying according to the different conditions, and each man must solve it for himself. But the ideal is one that should be common to us all, namely, to make an intelligent acquaintance with

the great essentials of our Christian faith an integral part of the intellectual equipment of every Christian.

What a difference it would make in our preaching if we could take for granted such an acquaintance on the part of our congregations! With what assurance we should preach the great themes, the themes that we so often pass over now for fear that they will not interest the people. We should have no fear then of doctrinal preaching, for we should know that there is nothing in the world to which men will respond so quickly as doctrine, provided the doctrine preached has been warmed by the fire of experience; for doctrine is only another name for truth, and truth is what enlightens and guides and inspires.

And how is it with the third of the great functions of the church—inspiration? Must we not confess failure here? When we bring our ministry to its prac-

tical test in consecrated lives—lives, I mean, spent in devotion to the great common causes through which human brotherhood is realised—are we not more than ever convinced of the gap between our ideal and our accomplishment?

This failure is due not simply to the fact that as preachers we have not presented the claims of the gospel in sufficiently persuasive and compelling terms; it is due also, perhaps even more, to the fact that we have not been able to utilise effectively the energy we have released. There are people who cannot teach a Sunday-school class or talk in prayer-meeting, and yet who would like to do something for Jesus Christ. But many of our churches are so imperfectly organised that there is no way of making use of their services. There is an unexpended balance of power in the church, of which we are not making full use. What we need to do is to divert this

power into the proper channels, to establish such points of contact between our churches and the agencies which are engaged in moral and social reform that they can draw on us for the recruits they need, and to create such a sentiment in the church that service so rendered shall be recognised and honoured as being as truly church service as preaching or praying.

But it is not only that we are not doing the things we ought to do: we are wasting our energy in things that are unimportant; we are expending in competition among Christians the power that we ought to be using in the attack upon the intrenched evils of society.

I spend my summers in a New England village whose united resources would be just sufficient to maintain one strong church, but we have three, each competing with its neighbours for the support of the community. In other villages no

larger you can find four or five, while not far away there are great reaches of untouched territory where the gospel is never preached. How can we expect people to believe that the church is in earnest when we waste our resources as we do?

That is why church unity is so important. It is important for practical reasons, because without it we cannot provide adequate openings for the energies of our strongest men and our most devoted women. We cannot grapple as efficiently as we might and as we ought with the great common evils which are all about us. But it is even more important in its bearing upon our ideals, for without it we cannot make the church what it was meant to be—the body of Christ, the organ for the expression of his Spirit in the world.

How is this ideal to be realised? What can we do to make the church what in

our heart of hearts we know it ought to be? There are two possible things we can do. We can meet and discuss the things on which we differ, and we can go out and work for the things on which we agree. Both are useful, but the second promises quicker and more lasting results.

In recent years there have been held a number of conferences upon church unity, but thus far they have accomplished little because they have all run against the initial difficulty of which we spoke at the outset—the fundamental difference in the conception of the church itself.

Yet all the while the cause of unity has been making progress. Why? Because Christians have been forming the habit of working together. You cannot work with a man without understanding him better, and you cannot understand him better without liking him better, and when you understand a man and like him you are willing to live with him.

We have an example of what may be done on the foreign field. Here the pressure of a common need is bringing Christians together, and their practical co-operation is bringing forth new forms of organisation adapted to express and to further this common purpose. The secretaries of the foreign missionary societies meet every year for conference, fields of labour are mapped out and plans talked over. In China alone there are six union theological seminaries, while most recently the Edinburgh Conference gave splendid illustration of what we may call the ecumenical Christian consciousness.

The example set abroad is being followed at home. Here, too, the churches are coming together to study the common problems which face us all alike, and this growing consciousness of unity is finding expression in such bodies as the Federations of Churches, local and national, and the Home Missions Council.

But, after all, this is only the beginning. When we have covered the field and mobilised our forces the question will still remain. What are we to do with them? What good will it do to unify our organisations unless we can direct the forces we command into channels of useful and efficient service? What is the use of having a strong church unless it becomes in fact what we have seen it ought to be—the leader in the great moral and religious revival of which we have been speaking?

And so I come back to that with which I began—the ideal. *The church will be what it ought to be when enough people see what it ought to be and want what they see.*

It is the preacher's business to make men see. Preaching is the impartation of truth by personal contact, however brought about. It is such a presentation of the ideal as shall commend itself to the heart and lay hold upon the will,

such a presentation as shall make God so real a fact to the consciousness of man that his soul shall be lifted up in worship; but, at the same time, such a presentation as shall make God's loving purpose for all mankind so clear that worship shall inevitably bear fruit in service. Preaching, in a word, is such a presentation of the gospel as shall make Christian doctors, Christian lawyers, Christian teachers, Christian statesmen, Christian philanthropists, Christian workmen, Christian fathers and mothers, and so at last a completely Christianised society. This is the minister's work, and there is no greater.

INDEX

Amalekites, 56.
Anglicans, 59.
Antinomians, 60.
Apostolic succession, 233.
Arminians, 60, 190.
Assyria, 70.
Atonement, 101, 169, 170.
Authority, 34, 48.

Babylonia, 70.
Bible:
  need of, 48, 49, 64.
  preacher's use of, 50.
  definition of, 51, 52.
  the older view of, 54.
  function of, 53, 54, 55, 76.
  interpretation of, 57, 59, 61.
  as standard, 64, 68, 76, 77.
  a progressive revelation, 67.
  inerrancy of, 70, 84.
  scientific study of, 72.
  Christ key to, 77.
Bowring, 110.
Buddhism, 29.

Calvin, 104.
Calvinists, 60, 190.
Canadian Pacific tunnels, 253, 254.
Catechism, Smaller, 65.
Catholicism, 28, 235.
Chalcedonian Creed, 193.
Chalmers, James, 134.
Christ:
  norm of Christianity, 38, 41, 43, 148, 179.
  standard for interpreting Bible, 79.
  humanity of, 179 *seq.*
  deity of, 177, 187, 188, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 202, 213, 217, 218, 222.
  brotherhood of, 185.
  personality of, 194, 195.
  transforming power of, in human life, 219.
  Cf. also Jesus.
Christian experience, 221.
Christianity:
  the universal religion, 33, 36.
  appeal of, 38.
  different kinds of, 39.
  definition of, 40.
  the incarnation of the spirit of Jesus, 42.
  religion of freedom and progress, 80.
Christian Science, 26, 95.
Christology of Paul and John, 79, 80.
Church:
  a means of social propaganda, 228.

growing efficiency of, 229.
as religious society, 232, 233.
as ecclesiastical institution, 232, 233.
function of, 237, 238, 239, 241, 256, 259, 260, 263.
opportunity and duty of, 242, 243, 249, 252.
leadership of, 244, 247, 250.
unity of, 266, 267.
ideal of, 269.
Congregationalists, 59.

David, 50, 56, 64, 182.
Davis, 173.
Democracy, definition of, 211.
Doctrinal preaching, decline of, 5.

Easter, 223.
Edinburgh Conference, 268.

Federation of Churches, 268.
Folks, Homer, 249.
Foreign Missions, 268.

God:
object of faith, 87.
need of, how met, 88, 89, 90, 91, 113, 114.
difference in view of, 91.
definition of, 93.
Christian conception of, 93, 108.
as healer, 95.
object of worship, 95.
source of help, 95, 97.
as just and righteous, 96, 101, 107.
Fatherhood of, 99, 103.
Majesty of, 103.
relation to world, 117.
belief in, 195, 196.
as self-revealing, 203, 204, 209, 218, 223.
Good Samaritan, 80.

Hall, Cuthbert, 125.
Holy Spirit, 82, 100.
Cf. Spirit of God.
Home Missions Council, 268.

Immanence, 104, 123.
Incarnation, 106, 180, 220.
Inerrancy, 20, 84.
Infallibility of the Bible, 84.
Institutional church, 240.
Intemperance, 149, 150.
Irenæus, 213.
Isaiah, 50, 63, 71, 73, 111, 169.

James, apostle—definition of religion, 32.
Jeremiah, 51, 73.
Jesus:
boyhood of, 183.
life of, 184.
as leader, 207.
need of, 212.
Messiahship of, 213.
Cf. also Christ.
John, 79, 187, 220.
Jonah, 205.
Jonathan, 64.
Joseph, 64.
Judaism, 28.
Justification by faith, 155.

Law, definition of, 117, 118.
Lazarus, 178.
Legalists, 60.
Love, 160, 163; salvation by, 160.
Luther, 6, 65, 77, 78, 85, 111, 154, 155.

Medicine, modern, 12.
Mephistopheles, 29.
Methodists, 59.
Minister:
  duty of, 255, 256, 262, 270.
  opportunity of, 261.
Miracle:
  definition of, 120.
  old attitude toward, 123.
  evidence from, contrasted with evidence from experience, 205.
Modern theology, *cf.* Theology, modern.
Modernists, 234.
Mohammedanism, 28.
Moses, 50.
Mount Tabor, 182.
Mussey, Mrs., 259.
Mysticism, 35.

National Conference of Charities, 249.
Nazareth, 182.
Nineveh, 205.

Origen, 57.

Paul, 51, 66, 75, 79, 111, 187, 204, 220.
Pharisees, 205.
Platonic philosophy, 200.
Prayer, 49, 50, 124, 125, 126.
Prediction, 71.
Presbyterians, 59.
Prodigal son, 80.
Prophecy, 71.
Prophets of Israel, 72.
Protestantism, 6, 19, 28, 234.
Psychology, 24, 184.

Rauschenbusch, Professor, 259.
Reformation, 6.
Religion:
  an ultimate fact, 22.
  varieties of, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 35, 36.
  nature of, 33, 34.
  of authority, 34.
  mystic and ethical types of, 34.
  problem of authority in, 48.
  scientific study of, 29.
Ritschl, 187.

Sacrament, 236.
Salvation:
  definition of, 131.
  universal need of, 132.
  evils to be saved from, 136.
  from punishment, 138, 146.
  from next world to this, 143.
  from sin, 146, 147.
  from selfishness, 158.
  through love, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168.
Saul, 121.
Saul (king), 55.
Saviourhood, 154, 158.
Schleiermacher, 187.

Science, modern:
effect of, on view of universe, 3, 11, 16, 105.
contribution of, to philanthropy, 247, 248.
Service, 154, 156.
Settlements, 26.
Simeon, the Stylite, 31.
Sin:
definition of, 148, 149.
social, 151, 152, 153.
Smith, George Adam, 73, 183.
Socialism, 25.
Solidarity of mankind, 143. 144.
Sonship, 155.
Spirit of God, 97.
of Christ, 135, 219, 220.
Spirit, witness of, 82, 221.
Supernatural revelation, 99.
Survey, 246, 259.

Tertullian, 24.
Theology, modern:
function of, 17.
distrust of, 20.
contribution of, to preacher's equipment, 22, 23.
gives new evidence of old facts, 24.
contribution of, to idea of God, 88.
contribution of, to understanding of Christianity, 201.
change of view-point, 10, 11.
Theology, the old:
its view of the Bible, 54 *seq.*
of God, 96 *seq.*
of salvation, 136 *seq.*
of Christ, 177 *seq.*
Thomas, 177.
Trench, 125.
Trinity, 100, 221.

Union Seminary, 125.
Unitarianism, 186.
Unity, church, 265, 266.
Uzzah, 56.

Wesley, 111.
Worship, 256, 257; new forms of, 258.

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